

WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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THE STATE OF SONG

60 singers and songs that
break the mould

Hafler Trio Buck 65 Takehisa Kosugi Jem Finer Nautical Almanac Oxbow on Dino

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Coming next month

THE WIRE TAPPER 11 FREE 15 TRACK CD

THE WIRE
TAPPER
11



Every copy of the June issue of *The Wire* will come complete with a FREE 15 track CD, *The Wire Tapper 11*, the latest volume in the magazine's ongoing series of new music compilations.

Beginning in April 1998, and compiled by the magazine's staff, *The Wire Tapper* series functions as an audio accompaniment to the kind of wide-ranging mix of underground and outsider music that gets featured in the pages of *The Wire* each month, from electronics, avant rock, dub and HipHop to new jazz, improvisation, noise, traditional musics, modern composition and beyond.

As with previous volumes in the series, *The Wire Tapper 11* will contain a range of new, rare or unreleased tracks. Musicians featured on the CD will include Albert Ayler, Brotherhood Of Breath, Wizened, To Rococo Rot, Icane, pore_z with Phil Minton, Jah Wobble and more.

The June issue of *The Wire*, complete with *The Wire Tapper 11*, will be on sale from 20 May. For more information mail sales@thewire.co.uk.

Letters

**Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, email letters@thewire.co.uk**
Letters should include a full name and address



Nobukazu Takekura: Can this face get on seats?

Bum rap

With regard to Neil Cooper's review of SubCurrent (On Location, *The Wire* 242) his comments describing the venue's management as "bums-on-seats sensitive" can hardly be justified on the back of a festival presenting several UK debut performances - Modang & Seuter and Double Leopards (without a doubt the highlight of the three days) are hardly household names. In fact, being a local scribe, Neil is very well aware that CCA's programme which operates in a zone very far left of the mainstream, would be regarded by most as the antithesis of "bums on seats".

The Nobukazu Takekura performance had been in the book for some time, and when it fell on the night before the dates that were finally selected for SubCurrent, given the content of his performance, which lacked off with a laptop improvisation, it would have seemed perverse from a contextual point of view to exclude him from the festival. This decision was taken in full consultation and agreement with the curator, and has been fully validated artistically by the number of people who came to both that and other performances over the three days. To suggest that Nobukazu Takekura was drafted in to boost audiences and sales is very misleading, and indeed disrespectful to the other performers. The nature of the work that we present at CCA is such that, even where events achieve full capacity, box office will not cover artists and production costs. SubCurrent did achieve full capacity - we lost money! That's our remit. We invest in the margins! The intention was that SubCurrent would be biannual, however based upon this year's success it will now be an annual festival. As for the earplugs - well, I didn't use them either, but they were there at Missonna's insistence. Maybe next time we'll pass on the earplugs - but ask the reviewer to remove his blinkers!

Thanks to David Keenan and *The Wire* for their support, and I look forward to seeing you next time.
Graham McKenzie Director, CCA, Glasgow, UK

iPod, therefore I hate music

Unlike Chris Bohn (The Masthead, *The Wire* 242), I raised a silent cheer at Adrian Shaughnessy's

comment on the "smug fraternity of iPod ownership" (issue 241). By the very act of transferring a CD to a hard disk, iPod users reveal themselves to be no lovers of music. They display a flagrant refusal to engage with the supplementary information that comes with a disc - the artwork, the liner notes, the seductive marginalia of who played what, when, where and with whom. Short of such contextual data, and programmed to collide with more and more of the same, music is reduced to an undifferentiated blurream: a nuance lost on the iPod user, who selfishly cares for music only as the anonymous soundtrack of his own solitary ambitions.

Richard Rees Jones Brighton, UK

Primer facie evidence

Thank you for the very interesting Cecil Taylor Primer by Brian Morton (*The Wire* 242). This article refers once again to the pianist's elusive Two To A Lovely T ten CD set. The set, which was given a glowing review by Julian Cowley in *The Wire* 222 and judged top jazz album in 2002 and among the best albums of the year overall (Rewind, issue 227), is difficult to locate, and expensive. The label, Codanza, does not appear to have a Website location. I was only able to find a listing at the Forecast Exposure site - a reliable US jazz online vendor. The Website's own description of the set (which it sells for \$200) includes the following evaluation: "Disappointing (and frankly, way overpriced) compared to the gorgeous and defining FMP box". I have also read that there's been a production error, and that two of the set's CDs are identical. If this is true and this is essentially a nine disc set, the price per CD works out at \$22.22 - which really is too much, even compared to other limited edition, high quality jazz box sets (eg the Moscic series). My questions then are: Is this set available directly from the UK? Is it a nme or a ten disc set, and how is it priced?

Nikos Haseoudis Athens, Greece

Former *Wire* Editor Richard Cook, who runs Codanza, assures us that the set should still be available: try www.amazon.co.uk (under "Cecil Taylor Trio Taylor").

the label's UK distributor, New Note (tel +44 (0)1689 877884). In the UK the set retails for around £120. Furthermore, though initial pressings contained one duplicate disc, the error was quickly rectified, and the set definitely contains ten CDs of different music - Ed

I was surprised that Brian Morton's otherwise excellent Cecil Taylor Primer omitted to mention his marvelous live solo album *Silent Tongues* (Black Lion 8776332 CD), which was recorded at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival and is a superb introduction to Cecil's music. Incidentally, it seems astonishing that there appears to be so little existing film footage of this most visual of jazz performers.

Dave Taylor Purbeck, UK

In the same issue's Invisible Jukebox, it was mentioned that Luc Ferran made a documentary, *Ambitus*, about Taylor for French TV in the late 1960s - Ed

I write to you in response to an article on Cecil Taylor by Brian Morton, in which he asked what became of the trumpeter Eddie Stevens Jr., aka Eddie Gale.

You can find much information about Eddie Gale at his Website (eddiegale.com), since his work with Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra and Larry Young and his two recordings as a leader for Blue Note Records - which have recently been reissued - that is, Eddie Gale's *Ghetto Music* and *Black Rhythm Happening* (both of which were reviewed in *The Wire* 237 - Ed). And soon to be released is a *Blue Note Rewritten: A Global DJ Mix*, which features one of Eddie Gale's songs as well as many other artists.

Deborah Stevens via email

For what it's worth, I feel that at least two albums would have been well suited to add to Brian Morton's Charles Mingus Primer (*The Wire* 242): *Chango* One and Two, which were released in the mid-70s, are strong examples of Mingus's late period small group compositional skills. The level of playing from all of the musicians on these sides is exceptional in my opinion. For me, these sides showed that Mingus 'still had it' after something of a fallow period. I would also mention *Mingus Moves* as

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Shitmat
Killbabylonkutz

Praxis Mu
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Shitmat's long-awaited debut album is proper match-up reggae-toe dubplate bleeps, jungle, jungle, jungle! From 'Killbabylonkutz' to 'Dreadful' the 'Babylon Boyz' approach to distorting effects over rhythms such as 'Amen Brother & Think About It'. Shitmat (aka Henry Collett) has risen to the upper echelons of the breakcore firmament.



Hot Chip
Come on Strong

Mossl Mesh
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Debut album from London-based lo-fi R&B specimen. Calling on influences as diverse as Grouplove, The Neptunes and inspired by NME, The Observer and The Independent, as one of THE bands for 2005. "A mighty debut" Time Out.



Tread
Tread

Third Ear Recordings
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Tread are Hiroshi Watanabe and Takehiko Kikuchi. Hiroshi Watanabe is also known as NAVY. "One of the most enjoyable albums in a long time. Deep and beautiful. Kind of Metro Area meets Kompakt." (DJ Magazine)



Sketch Show
Loophole

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Sketch Show is Yellow Magic Orchestra's Haruomi Hosono (founder YMO Member) and Yushiro Takahashi (12 beautifully crafted songs including collaborations with French Soprano and members from Conexus and Safety Bassoon). Special edition in 6 panel digipak headlining Sketch 2004 with Hosokawa as Human Audio Sponge.



Mr 76ix
Hits of 76ix

Skins
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Letters

a relevant choice from the same period. Thanks for a great read!

Darryl Pugh Syracuse, USA

Cotten nit pickin'

A few points re: Samantha Brown's Epiphany on Elizabeth Cotten (*The Wire* 242). Blind Willie Johnson never recorded for the Library of Congress. All his work was recorded for Columbia Records and issued on Columbia and Vocalion. Neither "Mississippi" John Hurt nor Rev Gary Davis had a North Carolina picking style. Gary Davis was from South Carolina – he did later move to North Carolina but already had developed his picking style prior to his move. Well, with "Mississippi" John Hurt – I think there's a clue in his nickname. Elizabeth Cotten's simple but lovely picking style is superficially similar to Hurt's but is light years away from Gary Davis's unmatched, complex, contrapuntal style. He was a genius.

More articles on seminal blues stylists please! Beefheart fans drop me a line at 26 Christchurch Road, Newport, South Wales, NP19 7PP.]

Mark Davies Newport, UK

Loop feedback

I am a founding member of The Loop Orchestra from Sydney, Australia. Ken Hollings did a review of our new CD Not Overly Orchestral in issue 242 in the Soundcheck section. It was a very insightful review; however he said that we "formed in the early 1990s...". In fact, Richard Fielding and myself formed The Loop Orchestra in 1982. Last year we celebrated our 23rd anniversary and we are still going strong. There is plenty of information, including our history and full list of performances, on our Website: www.thelooporchestra.com. We pride ourselves on still using tape loops played on reel to reel tape machines, old (but very human) technology which seems to have been left behind by the digital age. Richard and I do a fortnightly experimental music radio program called *Background Noise* on 2 MBS FM in Sydney (we also started radio programmes in 1982), and *The Wire* is like our Bible for news and reviews.

John Blades Sydney, Australia

Collapsing timelines

Reading your magazine is always a learning experience, and I seldom find any of the blatant inaccuracies and distortions (and inadvertent screw-ups) of other music magazines I read. However, having said that, there was one glaringly obvious mistake made in the otherwise wonderful cover piece on Ernstzürndende Neubauten (*The Wire* 240). Yes, you gave us a cover worthy of framing, and the extended article has given me insight into the new album which might

make me go back and listen with a different mindset (I really haven't taken it to like I have previous efforts)... but it also contained a few minor inaccuracies.

The main one that I wish to address is writer David Keenan's assertion that their masterpiece, *Haus Der Liebe*, was somehow inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the historical events of November 1989. This would be highly impossible considering the album was recorded in 1988 and released in the spring of 1990! Indeed, I know this deeply, and with every ounce of my being, as (fuelled by seeing Wim Wenders's film *Wings Of Desire*) I travelled to Berlin in October of 1989. That album (along with Neil Young's *Freedom*) was the soundtrack of my journey, as I travelled the S-Bahns and U-Bahns of Berlin's West and East, looking for sites from the movie, and even hailing up at Oberholz's club in Kreuzberg with The Laughing Hyenas and Klitziger, trying to get up the nerve to go speak with the man himself (whom I'd spotted sitting at the bar downstairs).

There was some awareness of the things going on in Dresden and Hungary, but really, I had no idea that things would be completely and profoundly different just one month after my return. So, in short, I think it would be safe to say that '93's *Tekila Rawa* was more inspired by these changes. When I interviewed Mutti (aka FM Eberhard) at that time, much of our discussion had been about how things had changed. Indeed, when I last spoke with him, in '95, he was moving to Italy and lamenting that he found Germany and Berlin difficult to spend much time in.

This started out as a short letter clearing up a minor mistake and has turned into a longer letter about, I guess, history. It's weird how time distorts facts, but I hold onto this stuff like the jaws of life, extracting the truth from the wreckage of history!

Caliban Jones Columbus, USA

Location reports

Thank you for the article on Sun City Girls (*The Wire* 240). But I believe there was an error regarding the Bishop brothers' grandfather. There is no such religion as "Christian Druze". Christianity's branches that were represented in the Lebanon province of the Ottoman Empire in Jamil Salim's day were Armenian Orthodox, Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Chaldean Catholic, The thousand year old religion Druze is not part of Christianity. It is an offshoot, now completely independent, of Israeli Shia Islam. In other words, the Druze are not Muslims either. You should get the facts right. Civil wars tend to happen in Lebanon all the time, so you have to be extra careful. The reason why I know these facts is that I play music with two brothers who also had a grandfather leave the Lebanon region for the New World in the last days of the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, the Druze is one of the world's most secretive religions. Readers are invited to read

Umberto Eco's Foucault's Pendulum to contemplate the mysterious religion's connection to the Masons.

The other geographic correction concerns the band The Belgian Waffles mentioned in Sam Marters.

Speaking on their behalf as their biggest fan, I wanted to let you know that they are not indigenous of Louisville, like say Slint. Four or five years ago the band relocated from Bloomington, Indiana. Half of the band are from there while the other (ounding) members are originally from the Munster/Richmond area of Indiana. Bloomington is important regarding issue 240 since Xemnas, who is somehow incongruously mentioned in every single article of said issue, taught electronic music there at Indiana University in the late 60s and early 70s. Richmond, incidentally, was also the birthplace of recorded jazz.

Only a British magazine would fabricate some theory that Charles Mingus (*The Primer*, same issue) was actually Scottish [it was a whimsical speculation rather than a fabricated theory – Ed]. No mention of his Native American heritage only adds insult to injury. How about a theory that he was related to the last truly Chinese dynasty, the Ming, founded by Hong Zhuo of peasant stock? The Druze adapted false Scottish names when they settled in the USA. Now I am just making things up [See how much fun it is? – Ed]. The important thing is that Charles Mingus was a human being who made great music. It ultimately does not matter who claims him as their own, Braaten said Beethoven was from Africa.

John Arthur Knight Indianapolis, USA

Trust in Tristan

Re: The Spectre Music Primer (*The Wire* 237). "Tristan" Murail was [Gérard] Grisey's most important partner in the development of spectralism, though his music is less compelling." Andy Hamilton's statement is patently untrue for many listeners. His orchestration alone is superb. The early use of IRCAM's Max software to synthesise the partials used with his acoustic ensembles, not to mention a kind of rudimentary "human" sequencer to play the parts, was truly astounding. I suppose in the end it all comes down to gnosticism, but I would hate prospective listeners to be put off listening to Tristan Murail by Hamilton's statement.

NJ Cross San Francisco, USA

Corrections

Issue 242: On the Ephesians page, we forgot to credit the photo of Elizabeth Cotten: it was by Diana Davies, courtesy of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution.

In Size Matters, the review of Ascoltaire Vs Kool Keith's *Drugs 3*'s CD misspelled the name of the label, Dubbel (a sub-label of Triple). For more information, go to www.tripletapes.com □

Coming next month

The Wire Tapper 11, an exclusive 15 track CD that will be given away free with all copies of the June issue.
See page 5 for details.

The Wire 244: on sale from 20 May

www.thewire.co.uk

The Wire's official Web presence, featuring news, links, out of print articles, MP3s, video clips, web exclusives, mailing list, merchandise and more

The Wire on Resonance 104.4 FM

A weekly show of new music hosted by *The Wire* staff, broadcasting across London on 104.4 FM every Thursday, 9.30-11pm GMT, repeated every Wednesday, 7.30-9pm GMT, with simultaneous streaming at www.resonancefm.com

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23.04 APOLLOSAAL/DEUTSCHE OPER Berlin
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01.06 HARRY KLEIN München
02.06 FRI SON Fribourg
03.06 ILLUSINE (PTR) Genf (CH)
04.06 ZWISCHENBÜHNE Horw
05.06 MANUFAKTUR Schorndorf
17.07 OOLIFESTIVAL Hasselt

18.06 SONAR Domino Showcase
Featuring: fourtet, to rococo rot, juana molina [live], max tundra (dj)



Bitstream

News and more
from under the radar.
Compiled by
The Trawler



Feeling nutty: Matmos

Locust Music have engaged **Matmos** to produce the latest instalment in the label's soundscape series, *Met. Lite: Rat Relocation Program*, which is out now, follows the fortunes of a rat caught in a (non-harmful) trap. In true Matmos style, the piece is based on the sounds produced by a mixed up rat trap. Locust have also announced something of a coup for later this summer: the first full album by electronic synth pioneer Ramon Sender, a founder of the legendary San Francisco Tape Music Center and former collaborator with Morton Subotnick. The album, titled *World Food*, will be released in June. www.locustmusic.com

>>> In addition to its regular weekly slot on London's *Resonance 104.4 FM*, this month **The Wire** will present four hour-long shows on the independent Belgian station *Radio Scopio*, which broadcasts out of Leuven. The shows will go out between 7-8pm local time every Friday in May (7, 14, 21, 28) in the station's regular *Question Mark slot*. www.radioscopio.com

>>> Former PUL guitarist **Keith Levene**, who was featured in *The Wire* 226, is swinging back into action with a newly licensed

release on Invisible Records, *Killer In The Crowd*.

Levene, who has been laying low for much of the 90s honing new material in his East London studio,

recently broke cover to appear with members of Asian Dub Foundation and Techno Animal in a soundcheck

with Adam Sherwood at London's Royal Festival Hall.

Killer In The Crowd features newly mixed versions of tracks that he released under his own steam and sold off his Website a couple of years ago, as well as a video component. Later this summer, *Invisible* will release a new album, *Perfect Crime*.

>>> *Furtune* is one of Europe's most endangered languages, spoken only

in a remote border zone of north eastern Italy.

Radio Onde Furtuna 90.0 FM is a long established station

that broadcasts in Furtuna and has become something

of a cult among Italian radio listeners, who tune in

even though many do not actually understand what they're hearing. Sound artist **John Duncan** has begun a new weekly slot on the station, *Cross Radio* (Thursday nights 11pm-2am live, then on random play till 7am), which he presents in English while invited guests speak their own native languages. Another occasional slot is "International Correspondence" – brief field recordings from remote regions of the globe. And before any Duncan fans start thinking of relocating to Urdine, the show is being syndicated to other stations including *Resonance 104.4 FM* (London, UK), *Reboot 104.1 FM* (Germany), *Ondre Sonora Radio* (Spain), *Deline Actual* (Canada), *WCR* (New York, USA) and *Radio Kinesaurus* (Japan).

>>> London improvisor **Peter Caseck** is planning the release of the second volume of *Your Favourite London Sounds*. As with volume one, the CD will contain field recordings made at various sites in and around London as suggested by members of the public. To nominate a potential London source for inclusion on the CD, mail pucaseck@btconnect.com

>>> Turn based audiovisual Improv duo **My Cat Is An Alien**, aka brothers Maurizio and Roberto Ospasio, have announced the forthcoming splashdown of *From The Earth To The Spheres*, a series of limited edition split LPs that will feature the answers music alongside that of an impressive roster of outsider music types including Jackie-O Motherfucker, Christian Marclay, Jim O'Rourke, Christine Carter of Sources, Thuga, Double Leopards and Glenda Of Excessive Secretion with Nels Cline. The LPs will come in handpainted wooden sleeves and will be pressed in editions of 100. The opening salvo in the series features Thurston Moore and is due for release in May/June. [www.mycatisanalien.com](http://mycatisanalien.com)

>>> On the subject of

Thurston Moore, *Sonic Youth*'s new album, *Sonic Nurse*, will be released on 7 June by Geffen. It's the

group's 19th album, and comes complete with cover

art by Richard Prince from his notorious *Nurse Painting* series. The *Famous Five* will tour Australia, US and Japan later this year with a European tour planned for May. Meanwhile, *Goo Deluxe* is in the works – a double CD/quadruple LP release of the group's first Geffen album, with sleeve notes by *Wire* contributor Byron Coley and a wealth of unreleased material.

>>> **Staalplaat Soundsystem** has just released a limited edition LP of material that was originally part of the installation *Nokomon*, which was presented at the *Earsound* festival in the Dutch city of 's-Hertogenbosch. Each side of the album consists of 11 groups of five loops. Contributors include

Staalplaat Soundsystem, Freibund, Haarm, Björk/Júlssón, Jim O'Rourke, John Hegley, Koze Inada, Massimo, Nerve Net Noise, Primmton, Radboud Metz and Rechenzentrum. www.staalplaat.org

>>> **Sun Ra Research CD One** is a new album of "conversations, audio events and music" featuring Sun Ra and various members of his Arkestra recorded by Peter and John Hinds, the brothers behind the *Sun Ra Research* fanzine and website. The recordings were made by the brothers at various US locations between 1985-90 and have been sourced from their extensive private archive of Ra-related audio, visual and printed ephemera. The conversationalists include Ra, June Tyson, John Gimble, Marshall Allen, Dennis Thompson and Pat Patrick, while the music tracks include recordings of Ra on a Yamaha DX7 synth.

www.sunraresearch.com

>>> Wine photographer **Simon Leigh** is one of 13 artists whose work is currently appearing in the exhibition *Fashioning Fiction In Photography* at New York's MoMA. The show examines the influence of art photography on depictions of fashion in the media during the 1990s. The exhibition also features images by the likes of Cindy Sherman, Juergen Teller and Nan Goldin, and the show runs until 28 June. www.simonleigh.com





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UK tour with müm (***) - April / May

- 22/04 - Brighton, Old Market **
- 23/04 - Liverpool, Academy 2 **
- 24/04 - Oxford, Zodiac **
- 25/04 - London, Old Vic Theatre **
- 27/04 - Bristol, City Varieties **
- 28/04 - Glasgow, Tramway **
- 29/04 - Dublin, Vicar Street **
- 30/04 - London, Coronet Theatre
- 01/05 - Glasgow, Tramway
- 02/05 - Edinburgh, The Venue
- 03/05 - Bristol, Marlowes
- 05/05 - Brighton, Pe No No
- 06/05 - TRC



Sung
Tongs



NAUTICAL ALMANAC



All at sea: James 'Twig' Harper and Carly Ptak

UNCHARTED WATERS BY MARC MASTERS

"We've never really studied or been trained," says James "Twig" Harper, half of Baltimore duo Nautical Almanac. "I don't know anything about measures or time signatures or anything like that." "And I never want to figure it out," adds partner Carly Ptak, laughing. "Yeah," continues Harper, "because then we don't have that hangup, and we get to concentrate on other things. We're not looking at the details, we're just trying to make an overall structure."

The pair's anti-knowledge is evident in Nautical Almanac's sound, an expanding field of frantic voices, sputtering voltage, and sputtering noise, drilling a hole somewhere between the ecstatic impulses of The Boredoms and the chance experiments of David Tudor. The duo use mostly hand-modified instruments, having spent the last decade building a vault of cracked electronics, inverted machines, and rewired recording equipment. "I make instruments because I can't play anything. But I don't control them; I just do things to them," explains Ptak. "Modifying electronics is really interesting because there's a high chaos probability," adds Harper. "You're having a conversation with the instrument as much as it is with you. You get to interpret it however you want, and give it whatever function you want. It all stems from not being a musician, and not having money to invest in things. So what do you do? You just find what you can and use it."

Harper started Nautical Almanac in Michigan in 1994 with Sol Meltzer, and future Wolf Eyes member Nate Young. "It was more rock-edged, but we were starting to do some tape pieces too," says Harper. "They were confused," interjects Ptak, who joined a few years later. The group became a duet when she and Harper moved to Chicago in 1997. After three years running a junk shop called The Mystery Spot and releasing a string of dense, distorted recordings on Hansen (the Michigan label run by Wolf Eyes' Aaron Diflorey), Harper and Ptak relocated to a decaying block on Baltimore's west side. There they bought a three-story building that once housed a doctor's office, and have since attacked

the structure as if it were an instrument begging to be modified. Ever busy, the pair rigged a sketchy analogue studio on the first floor, a CD-R factory for their Heresee label on the second, and a performance space dubbed Tantum Hill on the third (visitors have included Friends, Forever, Lightning Bolt, and The Flying Lutentellers). "I didn't feel neeny as much support in Chicago as we instantly had when we moved here," says Ptak. "There's a really good audience here. It's not huge, but they have fun, and they go with it. They don't just stand back. Even the real estate agent that helped us find this place got all excited and said, 'You have show us up here!'"

With its floors piled with well-chosen junk, walls coated with rescued doo-dads and rooms filled with in-progress craft, Harper and Ptak's cavernous abode feels like a communal art space. Indeed, it became one during the making of Nautical Almanac's latest album, *Rooting For The Microbes*, recorded for Providence's Load Records. "We generally have a stream of people coming through the house, so we encouraged some of them to record with us," says Ptak. "Music to me is about energy exchange, and we're so used to our own energies. When we just perform for each other, it's kind of like, 'Yeah, I've seen you do that before.' We need other people around to get new energy."

The energy on *Rooting For The Microbes* is sharp and searing, with random cracks and jolts, disturbed yelps and howls, and robotic burps and splats of petting the aural landscape like broken glass raining into a forest fire. While previous Nautical Almanac records are prone to drift into longer drones, *Rooting* is mostly prickly and pointillist, with restless ideas spattered in short spikes. "We told the people we were recording with that we were trying to think of this in a pop context, to do this in pop chunks," says Harper. "We didn't actually use the word 'pop,'" adds Ptak. "I kept saying, 'Can't you guys just play like The Beach Boys?' I can't sound like The Beach Boys, but we tried to get people here who could. It totally didn't work though."

Similarly angular and jarring, Nautical Almanac's live show is a participatory form of shock therapy. At Brooklyn's No Fun Fest in March, they soared quickly into a frenzy, firing off bolts of noise and shrieking in tongues until Harper threw his huge frame onto the crowd, only to return to the stage with a punctured lip and blood coating his teeth. A gangly one-man circus, Harper often uses his body as a sonic weapon, literally strangling himself in search of new vocal emissions.

"My rule is, if it hurts, don't do it, but still, sometimes it does," he shudders. "I make shrieking sounds, but I never push full force. I did start doing gag reflexes as a vocal tool, and after I while I figured out I could start vomiting really easily."

Harper and Ptak used to perform in creepy masks, coming off like possessed mannequins. Check the Heresee video compendium coddled together by Ptak. But the masks have recently gathered dust. "They were nice to use as a non-ego thing, to make us somewhat anonymous," laughs Harper. "But after a while, we realised we're much uglier without masks. And at one point there was a glut of masked noise bands, and we didn't want to be lumped into that. There's more to our music than that."

"That's how we're feeling with electronics now too," he continues. "A lot of people are doing modified electronics these days, and it's great, but we don't want to be just one thing." "I haven't felt very inspired by it in a while," confesses Ptak. "That happens with everything – I only get into it for a while. I discovered vocals recently, and that's a big challenge for me. Before, I never thought I could do vocals, so I had to make something that would sound like them."

The duo's refusal to stand still makes Nautical Almanac, after a decade of aural digging, still a vital force worth chasing. "We go through phases. We try to not be stagnant," declares Harper. "As soon as we're comfortable with an instrument or an approach, we think, 'That's bad. Stop that.'" □ *Rooting For The Microbes* is out now on Load



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STEVE HUBBACK

THE METAL URGE BY BRIAN MORTON



The artist as Vulcan; music as a literal test by fire. Think how often the symbolism of metalworking creeps into writing about improvised music – so-and-so's 'molten' tone, an 'amalgam' of styles, 'hammering' and 'forging', 'polish', 'sheen' – and in names of venues like The Klin and The Foundry – and it's clear that the connection between the two sides of Steve Hubback's art works at a deep level, not just as a nicely hedged career decision. Listening to him play percussion, you also want to picture what extraordinary thing is making these shimmering sounds. It's a perfect synaesthesia, the eye hearing, and the ear seeing.

Percussionist Steve Hubback makes the instruments he plays, not by stretching skins, or whittling end-graining strips of wood, but in the gassy heat of a smelting room. "Sometimes," he says, "I start with a piece of steel and heat it and start hammering and, kind of subconsciously, the work flows with its own force." These same processes are often audible as Hubback improvises on pieces that have been created out of ingots and pigs of metal. They're also sculptures, appealing to the eye long before the ear is engaged. So how does this Englishman, who these days lives in Reykjavík, describe himself? Which half of his hyphenate vocation is dominant: the visual and the aural?

"There are periods when I'm working as a musician and that's foremost," he elucidates. "Then I'll be smithing and creating sculptures, and that's foremost while I do it. All my activities are so closely connected that really it's all part of an evolving creative process. As far as my sound sculptures are concerned, the shape affects very much the sound, but so does my

craftsmanship and the energy that's imparted while making a piece. Everything is part of the process of forging a harmonious creation: alloy, hammering, heating, welding, grinding, surface treatment and final visual form."

Chemistry, geometry and intuitive motifs play their part. "I use stainless steel, bronze, nickel silver, iron and steel," he continues. "Almost all of my work is based on island hammering. Iron is forged hot, as is some stainless steel. Bronze is heated first, quenched, then hammered cold. Nickel silver I usually heat and cool slowly before hammering. I use various anvils and tree trunks for hammering. Then there is winding – all three methods, big, medium and tiny – grinding, cutting and carving with a grinder."

There's an old Jewish legend or folk tale about the metalsmith (the likely real profession of Jesus's father) who is able to make cymbals of such ringing purity that people travel from all over the East to find him. Hubback has also been in heavy demand. As an enthusiastic part-time percussionist, saxophonist Joe Lovano has commissioned specialised cymbals from Steve. "I make pieces for people who are looking for something different," he says, "something with its own unique character and with the ability to open up soundwise. You don't get that with commercially made sounds. I've been fortunate to have fantastic musicians like Paal Nilssen-Love and Marilyn Mazur play my creations. Also two of Denmark's best percussionists Bridget L. Larsen and Trineke Koordtloek, who are part of my group Metal Moves."

As the nights stretch in Reykjavík and the landscape growls and steams like a foundry, Hubback prepares for the start of the inaugural Wonderous Sounds

festival. "I have felt for some time that there are too few festivals and concerts for percussion and sound sculpture. So this will feature a concert by Trevor Taylor and Malcolm Ball performing on the wonderful Sculptures Sonores by the French brothers Bernard and François Baschet."

Hubback has other irons in the fire. "I'm working right now on creating a whole new set of sculptures for Metal Moves," he says. "We're going to be playing completely acoustically at the festival. Also there and premiering new music will be Erik Quick and Mathias Hemstock, two of the best respected and most creative drummers in Iceland. Some new CDs will be out soon: the duo recording made in Oslo last August with Paal Nilssen-Love, two more Metal Moves albums, *Live In East Germany* from 1988 with Detmar Dreseier, a new album with Erik Quick. I also hope to continue performing and recording with Ad Peijnenburg, Paal Nilssen-Love, Frode Gjerstad and Tony Moore again, Berntus Fidell and to do more harps and metals with Nick Le Best and Theo Travis in Recreator. There's also talk of a collaboration with Z'ew."

No need to light a fire under Steve Hubback, then. His physical energy is all the more impressive when you look at the stillness, cool and quiet of these sculptures; but then, as they start to sing, something of the heat, something of the sheer energy that went to their making, comes back at you. □ The Wonderous Music Festival begins in Iceland this month: see Out There. Steve Hubback CDs include *Runcerner* with Metal Moves and *Demystify* with Frode Gjerstad (both on FMR); *Wonderous Sounds* that Fill The Air with Erik Quick and Martinkirche Halberstadt with Detmar Dreseier, both available from www.hubgong.dse.nl/

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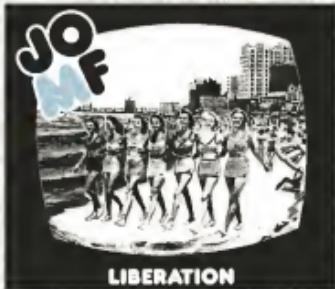
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LAURIE SPIEGEL

MOUSE BITES BY JULIAN COWLEY

Not long before his death in 2001, guitarist John Fahey initiated a recording collaboration with New York based electronics composer Laury Spiegel. "Our musics may seem quite different but that's superficial," Spiegel observes. "Deep down we shared a set of values about what music was for and a feel for how we liked it to be, a sense of exploration, love of several musical traditions, maybe also the ways we balanced improvisation with knowing in advance what we'd play, a feeling of being outsiders, and probably above all, a need for intensity in music, authentic expressive intensity." In addition, Spiegel was a guitarist, mandolin and banjo player before she became deeply involved with synthesizers and computers. Her early piece *Appalachian Grove* (1974), included on the compilation *Women in Electronic Music – 1977* (CR), registers her sense of continuities between folk practices and hi-tech possibilities.

Fahey's music fired her imagination during her teens in Chicago. Later she taught herself to read notation in order to play some of Bach's guitar pieces, then undertook formal study of instrumental technique and composition with teachers including Jacob Druckman. At the start of the 1970s, with fellow composers Eliane Radigue and Rhys Chatham, she explored the Buchla synthesizer installed by Morton Subotnick at New York University's Composers Workshop. She recalls, "Eliane, Rhys and I were good friends, trying to make what we called 'slow change music', very subtle, constructed to allow your perceptual filters to open so sonic sensitivity could increase, so you'd drop all the ways you'd habitually filtered sonic information." A fine example is the title piece of her 1980 LP *The Expanding Universe* (Philo).

After her formative experience as folk musician and improvisor, Spiegel was especially drawn to these analogue instruments and to computers (initially made available to her by Max Mathews of Bell Laboratories) because, as her notes to *The Expanding Universe* suggest, "All media in which you can work directly with

the sounds have more in common with each other than with traditional European techniques of working with symbols on paper." Subsequently she has used conventional notation as well as computer programming and direct manipulation of recorded sound, but a contemporary realism underpins her approach to studio composition. "Most of my own most meaningful listening experience has been by records and radio, not in performance venues," says Spiegel. "I suspect this has been true for most people for decades. It was pretty obvious by the 1980s that you could reach the greatest number of people and have greatest musical freedom if you composed directly for speakers and headphones as musical media in themselves."

The intellectual rigor of Spiegel's music is suffused with her emotional input, and her technical sophistication draws its vitality from intense hands-on involvement. Her 2001 release *Obsolete Systems* (Electronic Music Foundation) foregrounds the signature sound and specific character of ostensibly outmoded electronic musical resources, her compositions elegantly disclosing that the sonic identity of these systems is embedded in design particularities rather than electronic abstraction. She says, "Computers were not at all popular when I started using them, and even analogue synthesizers barely were. What they could do live was extremely limited. Today's concert laptop setups are incredibly more powerful than even giant room-sized computers were back then." In current technologies she recognises potential for the radical democratisation of music making. "We are emerging from a few hundred years of overspecialisation, a small active élite of music makers and a much larger group of musically passive recipients," she reflects. "And the relatively recent assumption that music consists of finite, fixed form 'pieces' that can be owned is perhaps counterproductive for music's deepest human purposes."

Spiegel has made her own contribution to 'intelligent instrument' design with the acclaimed Music Mouse,

"When the first Macs came out, I found the most natural way to interact with sound was to push it around with the computer's mouse, or to move around within a music space," she says. "I made Music Mouse for my own use and give copies to friends, but so many people wanted it that it became a 'product', needing written documentation, user tech support, distribution... This all started eating up a lot of time. Mice do tend to eat things." Spiegel's Music Mouse is a serious extension of music-making resources to non-specialists. In her own hands it has yielded remarkable results, as can be heard from the radiant oscillations and visionary expanses opened up on *Unseen Worlds* (Aesthetic Engineering). John Fahey visited Spiegel's loft shortly after completion of that recording, in 1991.

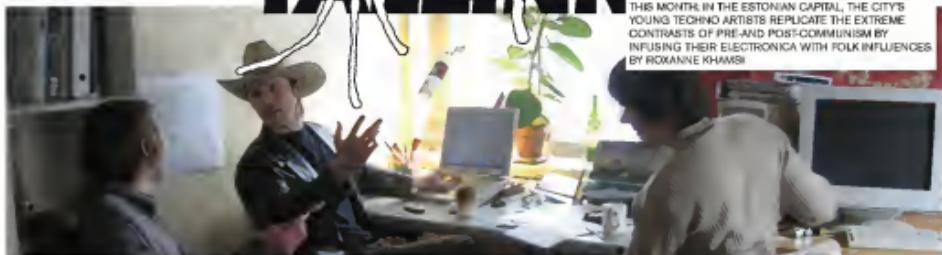
"To my amazement he listened to it over and over and really loved it," she says. "After that he went in some directions that were real musical departures for him."

Their proposed collaboration may yet be realised. "John laid down some pretty out-there guitar tracks, which I have on my hard drive," Spiegel reveals. "He sent them for me to edit, process and make bridges with electronic sounds, plain or processed acoustic instruments, whatever I felt would work. I might have enough emotional distance on his suddenly dying next to then go back to his materials and do it. I'd very much like to."

Her recent activities have included a rediscussion of Johannes Kepler's *Harmo-nices Mundi*, embodying in sound motions of the planets, newly released as a *Table Of The Elements* LP. *Back on Earth*, she has been recording animal sounds for digital treatment. "Also I've been playing acoustic instruments a lot again, improvising and once in a while writing pieces down," Spiegel concludes. "I can't ever predict what I'll do next. Most important is that a musical impulse grabs me strongly and pulls me with it; energises me to follow it wherever it wants to go." □ *Harmo-nices Mundi* is out now on *Table Of The Elements*. For more information, go to rebar.org/

GLOBAL EAR: TALLINN

A SURVEY OF SOUNDS FROM AROUND THE PLANET.
THIS MONTH IN THE ESTONIAN CAPITAL, THE CITY'S YOUNG TECHNO ARTISTS REPPLICATE THE EXTREME CONTRASTS OF PRE-AND POST-COMMUNISM BY INFUSING THEIR ELECTRONICA WITH FOLK INFLUENCES BY RIOXANNE KHAMSII



Studios scene: Wille Valme, Hannes Praks and Taavi Laesist of the HQ of Kohvrecords in Tallinn

Not too far outside the centre of Tallinn, Estonia's capital, a sparkling Jaguar automobile sits parked outside an old wooden house badly in need of a fresh paint job. This image perfectly encapsulates the emerging electronic sound of this city's music scene: a sonic meeting of flimsy technology and earthy melodic elements. Everyday life in the former Soviet republic of Estonia, a tiny state of 1.4 million people, is also full of striking contrasts. It's a land of curious combinations where 70-year-old women in fur hats might opt to pay for their bus fare by mobile phone. Even the most daunting concrete buildings, some of which served as factories in Soviet times, boast revamped offices with Internet access.

The hamey headquarters of Kohvrecords – a local label releasing electronic records of all sorts, including some with folk influences – does not disappoint. Unswelling sheets of red wallpaper provide the backdrop for their collection of computers and hi-fi equipment. This is where label manager Hannes Praks and his collaborators converge to listen and work on forthcoming projects. Since 1998 the label has been working towards bringing the music from their tiny country to a wider audience by touring in Europe as much as possible, making appearances at festivals such as Sónar in Barcelona.

"We don't release records very often," Praks explains when asked about the difficulties of finding talent in the relatively small population. "We try to keep a profile of releasing local work. We want to be associated with local musicians."

One release from Konverents, Dehendark Datus, a joint project by Estonian artists Barbanz and Pastasos, gives an arresting example of exactly what makes up the local sound. Vocal elements, often processed until incomprehensible, make cameos in tracks that combine wailing guitar sounds with quickly ascending bleeps. Another record, Shine Plate (Blue Plateau) by Galakidz (a young Estonian named Taavi Laesist), released in the same year, presents clapping synths mixed with beats that tease with an Eastern sophistication.

If the folk influence in Estonian music remains strong, it has many good reasons for surviving. The country, which suffered many hardships under Soviet rule for half a century, has embraced its unique national identity since splitting from the Russian Federation. Summertime sees a slew of folk singers descend on Tallinn to belt out traditional tunes. Dressed in old

fashioned countryside costumes, these folk song enthusiasts rewrite the sound of their country that the Soviet Union muffled for so long. The number of singers that gather together can reach the thousands on the special occasions that take place every few years.

So it's no surprise, then, that younger musicians working in Tallinn today do not shy away from using vocal elements in their compositions. And though some choose to dabble in English, it is not difficult to find people who embrace their punchy native language. One of the more recent HeHo artists in the country, a cheery named Charice who raps in Estonian, has quickly gained a following after the release of his debut album *Ühendust läimnes* (*Connecting Peoples*) at the end of 2003 and earned the title of best newcomer at the country's music awards this year. The 20 year old employs horns and live percussion to give her music a jazzy feel, adding quickly delivered lyrics on top of the mix.

Tallinn based Umbly Recordings, which signed Charice just months ago, is also the home of a DJ by the name of Ajukaja (pronounced ayu-ka-ya). The DJ, whose name is Raivo Saaremete, comes from the city of Kohtla-Järve in eastern Estonia, not too far from the Russian border. Ajukaja was the mastermind behind the Umbly album *Back In The USSR*, a collection of local hits from the Brezhnev Era. The pitch for the album from the label's Website makes the music bubble of the 1970s sound curiously exciting: "There is no Internet, No mobile phones, No satellite TV. The only decent music station is over the border. Records you want cost 50 to 70. Your mother earns about 100 a month. This is the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. Life is good."

But during those times Tallinn didn't see as grand a selection of music as many hoped for. "In Soviet times there were big names," Laesist says, explaining that the music scene had rapidly fragmented since Estonia regained its independence in the early 1990s. The development of the Internet played a strong role in the past decade as the capital was re-imaging its future. As a result, parallel musical developments in Estonia's neighbouring countries exerted less weight on the younger crowd of musicians than one might predict.

"I think Germany, and Berlin specifically, influenced us more than Finland," Hannes Praks says, when asked whether Helsinki's electronic sound has trickled down to Tallinn. It would not be inaccurate to imagine a

German influence in Estonia; centuries before the Baltic country first enjoyed statehood, it joined the German-dominated Hanseatic League as a channel for trade between Novgorod, Pskov and the West.

More recently, during the 1970s when the Soviet Union kept tight restrictions preventing people from getting their hands on music from the West, local movie composer Sven Grünberg gained a strong following. Grünberg knew how to orchestrate futuristic music that combined Ambient ingredients with satisfying melodic arrangements. He and his group Mess churned out fun and futuristic pieces that differed dramatically from the pop style Soviet musicians who would sashay in Tallinn on tour.

The children who once admired Grünberg's catchy, ultramodern electronic compositions now possess laptops and instruments to drum up their own inventions. But as a result of his influence, music writing for cartoons and short films still carries high respect.

Today film houses, rather than clubs or concert halls, are more attractive for those seeking experimental music. Praks admits that the best music in Tallinn is still heard at private parties because the capital has yet to offer regular venues for more adventurous muscians.

"The funny thing is that last year our bands played more abroad than in Tallinn," he says.

But working in a small country does have its advantages. Few albums with electronic elements offer the pleasurable emulsion and guttural words of Estonian, which as a Finno-Ugric language is much closer to Finnish and Hungarian than it is to the languages of other Baltic states.

One person who knows this well is Wille Valme, a friend of Praks involved at the start of Kohvrecords, who recently started up the sub label Onnukvis. An album from Onnukvis brings guitar rifts to the forefront without leaving behind playful technological enhancements or old Estonian men singing folk tunes in their local dialect.

With a smile, Valme describes the appeal of the album as a "forthcoming dancefloor cleaner" for the wandering vocals – lacking beats but full of spirit – that pop up on some of its tracks.

As a growing number of youth in Tallinn take to the floors of local clubs to bounce around to the standard sort of European pop music, it appears that Valme has a lot of floors to clean. □

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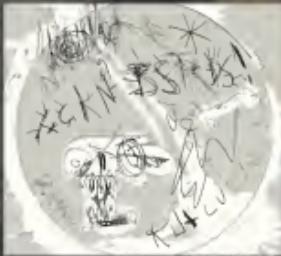
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TESTED BY DAVID STUBBS
PHOTOS BY JOHN HOOPER

Buck 65, aka Richard Terfry, or 'Stinkin' Rich', was born and raised in Lower Sackville, a tiny, remote town in Nova Scotia, Canada. A B-boy and enthusiastic breakdancer from an early age, he also showed great promise in baseball before an obsession with HipHop, its antecedents and odd, distant musical relatives, claimed him for good. He moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia and landed his own HipHop radio show, *The Bassment*. He also tried his hand at DJing, producing and rapping.

It was with the 1996 cassette release *Psoriasis* (Metaforensics), recorded with Sixto under the collective moniker of Sebutones, that Buck 65 made his first impact as a rapper and producer in underground HipHop. Over the next few years he recorded five further albums under what he titled his 'Language Arts' series, plus a couple of 12's for Oakland's Anticon label, before being signed by Warners. They released 2003's *Talkin' Honky Blues*, whose sonic patchwork of diverse, secondhand influence and vivid lyrical stench of hard luck life typify Buck's improbable yet perfectly logical contribution to the HipHop/anti-HipHop canon. Not for him the braggadocio, machismo or tall tales of fabulous, ill-gotten wealth. Extolling the virtues of the dispossessed and dirt poor à la Tom Waits, Buck 65 declares, "I like art made of garbage!" His fanbase, which includes Radiohead, Aphex Twin and Vincent Gallo, is as diverse as his influences, which range from Woody Guthrie, Gene Vincent and Dolly Parton to Stockhausen, Sun Ra and DJ Supreme. Buck 65 currently lives in Montreal but is mostly on the road. The Jukebox took place in London.

WOODY GUTHRIE "WORRIED MAN BLUES"

FROM WORRIED MAN BLUES (COLLECTABLES) 1998

OK, this isn't the hardest. Woody Guthrie's as real as the deaf gets. I love reading those old quotes of his, like 'This is music for people with callouses on their hands.' He really had a lot of disdain for people who claimed to be talking on that role who weren't working men like himself. He did work, it's so extraordinary too, hearing his tales about how so many of his family and friends died in different fires. You know, the coincidence. But more extraordinary, a Jewish communist in America, pulling that off? But it's great how he was able to take on not just folk but also the talking blues.

You cover Guthrie's "Talking Fish Blues" in your live show. Is that to demonstrate the link between Guthrie and contemporary HipHop?

Absolutely. You know when people talk about the history of HipHop and rap, they never think to mention Woody Guthrie. But why not? They were rapping in the 30s. That's certainly wildly exciting to me. Recently, I became a fan of his all over again. And I've come across songs I hadn't heard since my childhood, running around in the woods behind my house with my friends, singing these songs I had no idea were attached to him. I guess living in rural North America, folk music is in the air. You sing these songs and pass them along. Even those in the know aren't quite certain what Woody wrote and what he covered. I'd always had a liking for the earliest Bob Dylan and it was something to me to know he'd been so influenced by Woody Guthrie.

There are people who favour Phil Ochs over Dylan because while Dylan went his own way, Ochs continued to carry the political torch passed on by Guthrie.

I suppose in some ways I'd fall into that category. I've been moved to tears only a very few times. Hearing [Guthrie's] song about the 1933 mining massacre, when over 70 children of striking miners were crushed to death when strikebreakers raised a false alarm, was one of them. Then a few moments later he could transport you into hysterical laughter. That's what I like to do – temper sadness with humour and humour with sadness. He had this great sense of humour, related to people in a very simple, human way – and he was out there, riding the busses, y'know, really living it, going from town to town, singing for his supper, being a champion for the common man and making a stand for what's right.

I get the impression you empathise sartorially with Guthrie as well.

Oh, sure. [Laughs] I completely admit I'm caught up in that, the way I dress sometimes. I do have my Woody Guthrie t-shirt when I'm traveling the world, riding on trains, listening to him in my headphones.

STEVEN JESSE BERNSTEIN

"NO NO MAN"

FROM PRISON ISB POP! 1998

[Brown] Is this one of Jack Kerouac's things? It was actually recorded in the early 90s.

[After a short while] No, I haven't heard this.

It's by Steven Jesse Bernstein, who's been branded a contemporary Beat poet. It was mostly recorded posthumously – with Steve Fisk from Pigeonhed supplying the funkified, Burroughs-style loqued musical backdrop. He committed suicide in October 1991.

I can see how this fits in neatly with a lot of the Beat stuff which certainly influenced my writing and music. It's my interest in words and literature which I had in place before my interest in music really took over. Applying spoken word to music as well as rhythm and rhyme, and fitting in so many words. This is what it's all about. I really feel it's a shame that something like this couldn't possibly catch on and be a hit.

He seems to talk from the same, peripheral position as you do – the darkness on the edge of town, so to speak.

I always have a policy on each album to have a track which is freeform. That's my homage to the Beat thing, this sort of thing. It's nice to shrug structure off once in a while and say absolutely what you want to say. But still, when people think of spoken word, they do have this misconception that it is all content, that it isn't styled or fashioned in any way. That's absolutely not the case. You can hear it in the way Bukowski reads, or Burroughs or Kerouac or this. There's a way that this stuff needs to be read and I don't think any of these guys would have trusted someone else to read their work. There are words that have to be hit, there are beats there, which is why they're called Beat Poets. Steven Jesse Bernstein? I'm gonna have to write this down.

GRANDMASTER FLASH & THE FURIOUS FIVE

"THE ADVENTURES OF GRANDMASTER FLASH ON THE WHEELS OF STEEL"

FROM ADVENTURES ON THE WHEELS OF STEEL (BEGUM/BUSGARH) 1998

This song evokes a lot of strange images, memories that linger of growing up, in a very small rural town in the middle of the woods wearing rubber boots and walking up a dirt road with a huge portable stereo, playing HipHop at full volume while people were tending to their farm animals. I developed my interest and fascination with HipHop very early on. But what always intrigued me the most, was what the DJ was up to, so when I heard this, early [DJ] DST, Herbie Hancock's "Rockit", I could barely breathe when I was listening to them, it sounded like music from outer space to me.

How did this music find its way to you?

When I was still young enough to be babysat, I'd always specifically request my parents for my best friend's sister to look after me, partly because I was in love with her but also because she had a boyfriend who was a DJ at the rollerskating rink. I'd go down every weekend and I'd have access to his DJ booth and I'd grill him on everything from the Enjoy and Sugarhill labels, which were the only two in those early days. Also, the way it circulated back in those days was, if anyone ever took a trip to New York City, it was your duty to the lifestyle to record radio shows – Marley Marl, Mr Magic, DJ Red Alert – and bring those tapes back and they would circulate. That was our Internet.

How soon did you become aware of the avant garde antecedents to HipHop – John Cage using turntables as early as 1959, William Burroughs's or Tristan Tzara's use of 'cut and paste'?

Pretty quickly. Burroughs especially – things like Break Through In Grey Room. I've got some in my bag right here. Cage I discovered later on. It's always been a curse in my life, this need to ask, 'Where does this come from?' People debate whether my records are HipHop, but I think that if my mind is being blown by Skip James or William Burroughs then I think what I do is more essentially HipHop than anything else. Africa Bambataa bringing Kraftwerk into the Bronx is the same as me bringing Woody Guthrie into the scheme of things.

Although you're considered primarily as a wordsmith, a large part of your live show is taken up with scratching.

I think myself as a DJ first, performer second. And in that whole, grated, testosterone-fuelled DJ tradition of the 'battle', behind the turntable was where I went into the fray.

Yet you don't exactly assume a macho stance – hand in jacket pocket, stooped awkwardly...

Yeah, it's more of a Dee Dee Ramone, Elvin Costello stance. I do find that the macho aspects of DJing do overshadow the art. When I see DJs really refine what they're doing, like Momma Mike and Z-Trip, I think, you could present this at a concert hall. I just find some of the silly behaviour that goes with DJing a bit of a turn-off. In the earlier days there was still a measure of fun and the guys were prepared even to laugh at themselves. You know, I was reading recently that a group of Polish breakdancers just put on a show for the Pope and I was wondering if they were making those aggressive gestures at him...

THE CONGOS OPEN UP THE GATE

FROM HEART OF THE CONGOS (BLOOD AND FIRE) 1977

I would say this is simply the greatest album ever recorded. To me, this record has it all. Lee 'Scratch'

Perry never did greater [production] work. The tunes are utterly unbearable. Cedric Myton's falsetto is so haunting and even creepy – on one level, the music seems incredibly uplifting but on closer inspection the songs are dreadfully dark, depressing – yet danceable. There's so much to marvel over in terms of what Lee Perry was doing and yet it's completely accessible. I'm kind of a purist for vinyl but this is one case where I'd recommend even to a collector that they get hold of the Blood And Fire double CD reissue. The packaging is absolutely incredible.

Was there a thriving reggae scene in Halifax?

Actually, it was my interest in and pursuit of HipHop which led me to this. In Halifax you're so remote, so barely on the map, you don't get a lot of live shows coming to town. Yet luckily for me, back in 1988 or 1989, Linton Kwesi Johnson played Halifax, I was already up on some of his records. And to see him live it was clear that the dub poets had been an influence on HipHop. Another thing I love about reggae is the strange manglings you get of some of the words with the patois. So, for instance, you'll have 'Sodom And Gomorrah', instead of 'Gomorrah'.

Not unlike James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

Yes, they're really fascinating mutations. Actually, this record gives me the creeps. There's another song by Lee Perry called 'Kiss My Neck', which sounds like voodoo to me. There's real terror there. Some of those noises. What the hell is that sound in the background? Castle? That's amazing.

GAVIN BRYARS

'TRAMP WITH ORCHESTRA III (NO STRINGS!)

FROM JESUS' BLOOD NEVER FAILED ME YET (POINT 1949)

I'm gonna have to move in a little bit here. [Draws up chair, puts ear right up against speaker] Oh, yeah! This is an incredible recording. Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet. I've read the story of Tom Waits driving his car late at night, listening to the public radio channel, catching this and nearly swerving off the road. Didn't he later record a version of it?

He actually appears at the end of this recording, to debatable effect.

Could we skip onto that? [Listens to 'Code: Tom Waits With High Strings']. Oh, yeah! That's Tom. You know, there are people it truly looks up to and in whom I place great stock. One is Bob Dylan, who said that the problem with modern music was that people didn't fear God any more. And I gotta tell you that when you hear people like this, or those old Harry Smith and Alan Lomax field recordings, people impaled by some sort of spiritual push, be it from fear or joy, it's undeniably moving, whether you're religious or not. And unless you have no soul you can't fail to get caught up in this.

Bryars tells the story of how he played the loop of the tramp singing at a very low level in the office

where he worked and came back to find his co-workers deeply affected, even quietly weeping. It's taken from a 1971 documentary about down and outs living around the Elephant & Castle and Waterloo in London. The irony of the tramp singing the hymn is, of course, that Jesus hasn't done the poor old sod any favours at all.

I live for those stories. Some days ago I found myself at a train station in the middle of the night. I often find myself in those situations and it's where I do a lot of my best writing and thinking, those small hours. That's when those strange characters from the margins breed into the pages – drunks and beggars. It always amazes me seeing people who are ostensibly drunk and at rock bottom slip almost unconsciously into song. What is that? It's not that they're gifted as singers generally but there's something desperate, yet great and magical and coming from a pure place.

Do you connect with Waltz's empathy with the notion of the vagrant, especially the singing vagrant?

Yes, very much. With people like Dylan, Waits, Kubrowski, it's about finding humanity and beauty and sorrow in the margins of society, in 'low life'. I guess that again stems back to my childhood, the neighbourhood, even the street I grew up in where the poverty was Third World. You had people who couldn't even clothe themselves. But they were the people I grew up with and I came to value their insights and ways. I feel it's unfair for us to take away from these people their dignity, when they already have nothing. All they have is breathing, getting through the day, life at its bare essence.

THROBBING GRISTLE "WEEPING"

FROM THE THIRD AND FINAL REPORT OF THROBBING GRISTLE (INDUSTRIAL 1982)

Well, I recognise Genesis P-Orridge, right? Right. At his most abased.

[Laughs] The persona on here reminds me of reading Nietzsche and the whole idea of the weakling child in bed with his books, the weakling genius idea – and being made to feel that way in the macho world of HipHop, feeling that you're the weakling who knows a little too much and can't really compete on those terms. Throbbing Gristle's influence is spread all the way through my back catalogue.

They take the notion of challenging the listener to very exacting, punitive levels, don't they?

Yeah, but that's great, to see how much an audience can take and it doesn't get a whole lot more challenging than this. Mind you, I worked in a radio station for 12 years back in Halifax and they had two vinyl libraries, one dedicated only to Canadian records, in which I was fortunate enough to discover The Nihilist Spasm Band. Check them out, you'll love them.



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In London recently, you used Throbbing Gristle as part of a live soundtrack to the David Lynch film *Eraserhead*, didn't you?

That's right, and if I may be so bold as to use the word "artist", it was one of the most satisfying artesian nights of my life. I was given the challenge, which I gleefully accepted, to make us a score to this film. I played the film on mute and played Anthony Braxton's replacement the voices, as well as HipHop and Radiohead. Then, with the climactic scenes in which it gets heavy and intense and things explode, I used [TG's] "Hamburger Lady" which I thought worked perfectly. I twisted it and I brought the volume up to the point that by the end the walls were shaking... I believe that this was the ideal way to get someone into Throbbing Gristle – work up from something familiar. Provide a context.

Film can do that – the use of Ligeti and Penderecki in the soundtrack to Kubrick's *The Shining*, for instance. Even if it isn't the context that the music was originally intended for, it can still have impact. The visual does provide a luxury. I mean, Dang on a Saturday night, I'm hardly gonna slap on Throbbing Gristle. But by the end of the *Eraserhead* night, they absolutely naked the rafters.

I think part of my interest in Genesis P-Orridge is that I'm afraid of the man. But I've always been drawn to things I'm afraid of.

MC SOLAAR

NOUVEAU WESTERN

FROM *PROST COMMENT PROST DANS 1994*

Well, I recognise the loop, of course. It's Serge [Gainsbourg], right?

Correct. But here it's sampled by a French rapper. MC Solaar? Right. You know, Gainsbourg is simply a genius, one of the very people for whom I reserve that word. When I lived in Paris, I visited Gainsbourg's grave once a week. I just wanted to spend time with him. Beyond that, in regard to French HipHop, that makes so much sense. The traditional chansons francophones are so word heavy, the lyrics are Job One, it's obvious that they'd make a natural transition to HipHop. The language lends itself to HipHop. And holy mackerel, I tell you, there's a real berserk, experimental, electronic thing going in underground French HipHop right now.

It's not so long ago that the French had no music scene that was disseminable to the outside world. But then, other nations do seem like that. I mean, who has the patience, say, to discover what's going on in the Greek music world? Few. It's funny, my biggest following is in France, a nation notorious for its bad music taste [laughs]. But that's turned around now. Why did you move to Paris?

I think the success of people like David Lynch and Tom

Waits who were treated so well there persuaded me that I'd be treated well there too. There's a longer tradition going right back to Sidney Bechet, who had his whole career in Paris. With me it takes a different path but it's the same thing, really.

SIXTOO

"BOXCUTTER EMPORIUM PT 1"

FROM *CHEWING ON GLASS & OTHER MIRACLE CURES*
INNA TUNE! 2004

So far I really like it... [furnows brow as a shimmering, scalding loop tickertapes round the mix]. I love it when people add majestic touches to HipHop beats.

He's a buddy of yours.

Um... sounds like Sixtoo... is it? You know, best friends as we are, whenever he's making music, he won't play it to anyone, not even me. He keeps it under a tight lid. Have you heard the track he did with Demo Suzuki ["Storm Clouds And Silver Linings"], included on this LP? That's really something. And for Can fans too. He's done something very respectful there.

Sixtoo's one of those guys who takes a huge leap with each recording and he's started working with live musicians, delving deeper into his interest in jazz and Prog. Most recently, however, I notice he's been listening to a lot of Cabaret Voltaire and Joy Division. He's boasted to me, with a sly look on his face, that his new record is a rock record. God knows, I love the guy, we've helped each other through ups and downs over the years – and for almost as long as I've known him, he's been something of a miserable bastard. For a long time, he suffered from what he regarded as a lack of validation, he felt that his music was failing on deaf ears. Then he got signed to Ninja Tune, a tailor-made home for him, and the smile hasn't dropped off his face ever since. He's chasing after music full tilt, full of passion and ideas and I'm just sitting back and waiting to see where he goes from here. He's working with guys like Matt Kelly from Halifax like me, a real music intellectual and unshoeable guitar player. What a gloriously dark record this is. You know, we've put time by to make another *Sebastones* record. Our aim was always to take things like Throbbing Gristle and Sun Ra and apply them to HipHop.

You've known the Anticon people – cLOUDDEAD and co – a long time, haven't you?

That's right, because a lot of the guys who formed the whole core of that movement came from Maine, in the extreme north east of America situated next to Nova Scotia where Sixtoo and I are from. So here we were, these nerdy white kids going to university, into Stockhausen and making HipHop, it was just inevitable that we'd meet and share ideas.

The guys from cLOUDDEAD and I made a whole album onto hard disk which crashed before anyone made a copy – so this album is drifting off into the

outer reaches of outer space. We made a record that doesn't exist. It's utterly heartbreaking to think about that.

HARRY PARTCH

"THE BEWITCHED (SCENE 1)"

FROM *ENCLOSURE FIVE: HARRY PARTCH (1930 REC) 1989*
Is it Harry Partch? I've got some of his records but I've had a hard time recognising the title of this. It's from *The Bewitched*, a theatre piece Partch wrote in 1957. He trained a company from the University of Illinois to perform it. This recording was made in Germany after his death.

This is a guy I came to through my interest in Tom Waits. The idea of this kooky weirdo making his own musical instruments from pieces of junk and garbage. This is like all of his work, very interesting and affecting but also spooky – close your eyes and try to conjure up mental images to this, what do you get, dancing skeletons?

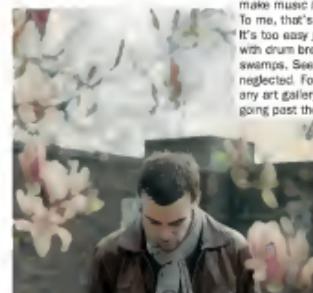
There's also a strong feeling of gamelan. There's certainly very little affinity with Western forms.

Yeah, certainly I can imagine many people coming to this fresh thinking it was maybe Japanese or the music of the South Pacific. He was never accepted by the American musical establishment – they refused to accept his musical findings or notational system as 'legitimate'. So he was always on the margins, bi to living as a hobo or dying as a penniless alcoholic.

It's hardly as if he's become a mainstream figure since he died but you certainly have to wonder what he would have made of the measure of acclaim and recognition he received subsequently. And for me the huge appeal of Harry Partch is the hobo aspect, this drifter who was haunted by music. It almost hurts trying to fathom his motivation.

Harry Partch, HipHop, hobos – there's this common element of scavenging.

Absolutely. These are the ideas I've talked about over and over again. The idea of beats was a form of scavenging and foraging... Afrika Bambaataa and Kool Herc and guys like that going as far ahead as South America, quite literally looking everywhere for these sounds. I love looking beyond just drum breaks, being a musical archaeologist, turning rocks and rotten logs over, discovering salvagable things I've only half-jokingly referred to myself as a garbage collector. One of the lyrics of my album *Square* (2002) runs, "We make music from used up junk and bad luck dreams." To me, that's what it's about and it's wildly exciting... It's too easy just to go to the retailer who services DJs with drum breaks. Get out there. Wade through the swamps. Seek out the washed-up, the driftwood, the neglected. For me, a junkyard is more interesting than any art gallery. Especially in the UK – nigh the trains, going past the junkyards sets my mind racing. □



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WORDS: PHIL ENGLAND,
PHOTOS: FRANK BAUER



"**T**here's nothing sharper than thinking you might not live to the end of the year," says Andrew McKenzie, principal member of the Hafer Trio. McKenzie is currently operating at an alarming rate, hindered only by his recently contracted Hepatitis B and Auto Immune Hepatitis. "I'm trying not to use it in a desperate sense," he says of his illness, "I'm using it in a sense of being much more conscious about what it is I'm doing."

The Hafer Trio are not strictly a group – McKenzie prefers to call them a "collective enchanted loom". Formed in 1980, it has featured extra members/collaborators including co-founders Chris Watson (then of Cabaret Voltaire), now better known for his spooky close recordings of natural phenomena and fauna) and the fictionist Dr Edward Mordrake, as well as storyteller Willem De Ridder, Ben Ponton of the post-industrial group *soviét* (france), film maker Ian Lake, graphic artist Neville Brody, house musician Zbigniew Karkowski, performance artist John Duncan, film director Peter Greenaway and post-punk modernist Anne Sprinkle.

Since The Hafer Trio's debut release, *Bang – An Open Letter* (1984), McKenzie and friends have been seeding the world with countless mystifying, beautifully produced packages containing opaque, arcane texts and sound works, ranging from cut-ups, collage and tape transformations, through to elaborately detailed psychological transports. But after a succession of highly regarded releases in the early 1990s – the *Kill! The King* trilogy, the first two parts of a "sex trilogy" and *Hafer Trix Play The Hafer Trio* – McKenzie announced a "Farewell Tour" and began to disappear off the radar. A double CD, the excellent *Whinging About Chickens*, set for release in 1996, didn't materialise until 2002, and although a series of 10" records trickled out between 1996-98, at £50 apiece these hand-numbered editions of 333 threw all but the most dedicated fans off the trail.

Now the dam has reopened. A flood of new releases has been gushing forth, live activities have been flourishing and McKenzie has been forging alliances with a host of new collaborators including Autecine, members of Sigur Rós, Blaxx Bangkai, Michael Graa and Wee's Bruce Gilbert. At last spring's UK All Tomorrow's Parties festival, rather than appearing onstage, McKenzie suggested broadcasting a live performance via the internal TV feed piped into the site's accommodation chalets. The unreleased video of the performance shows a collage of fabric surfaces billowing in the wind. McKenzie appears out of the shadows, sits down at a table and reads a typical Hafer text: "Good evening, here is the news..."

So what explains the years of relatively low-level activity between 1996 and 2002? There are a number of threads to the story. Perhaps things started to unravel around a decade ago when McKenzie parted ways with Touch, the label he became involved with at the time of its foundation by Jon Wozencroft in 1982. Later, McKenzie would help map out some of the label's aesthetics – in terms of the interleaving of sound works with graphics and the printed word – and the two were closely associated until the early 1990s. In 1992 Touch licensed the early Hafer Trix back catalogue to The Grey Area Of Mute Records. The deal promised wider exposure for his music, but the original, expensive packaging which Touch had been

happy to bankroll had to be sacrificed. In hindsight, McKenzie feels, "The thing that really killed it off for me was the reissues on Mute. The packaging and the booklets of the original records is an important part of the project and they just threw it away."

"For me," he continues, "more than a lot of other people, making MP3s of my stuff is useless because you're missing all this other stuff – it's like pulling out every other page of a book. I was really upset about it. But thankfully, I'm now in a position to get it right."

A rescue programme has now been initiated by Dutch label Korn Plastics. So far, *Kill! The King and The Sea Org* (now expanded to 50 minutes, plus a movie) have been reissued, with a dozen more on the way, starting with *Mastery Of Money* (1992) and *How To Reform Mankind* (1994), which complete the *Kill! Theng* trilogy.

Mckenzie's work is informed by his study of religious and philosophical systems, which penetrates everything he does. In the mid-90s he became disillusioned by the (not unfounded) feeling that, although other artists had come forward to populate the areas he had originally mapped out, they didn't share his seriousness or sense of purpose. "When computers got fast enough and cheap enough to do sound then everybody became a sound artist," remarks McKenzie. "People stopped believing in it. When people make things without having any respect for what they're doing, people can feel that." At the same time, in a consumer culture, everything tends to take on an air of vulgarity, despite disparities in merit. "I couldn't tell just churning this stuff out," he affirms. "That's partly why I stopped... I also got really sick of the subsidy circuit and people producing stuff just because they'd got a grant – 'See you in Darmstadt', you know the kind of thing."

McKenzie was born in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in 1963, and released his first 7" at the age of 14 before going on to form the punk rock group Flesh. In adult life he has moved far from his origins, having lived in Amsterdam for many years, and residing in Reykjavik, Iceland for the last ten. On a visit to Denmark during this period, circumstances conspired to seal his fate. "I made the stupid mistake of opening my mouth when somebody said, 'You know how to fix computers, don't you?' And I said, 'Yeah', and that was me disappoined, because I got sucked into this whole thing. I did low level security systems programming for governments, police and banks. These jobs paid a large amount of money and I was able to live for the first time in a way that most people would consider normal."

This arrangement fell apart when he was diagnosed with his two liver diseases, and the other members of the company he had helped to establish used his failing health as an excuse to sack him. "I would suddenly collapse, or black out," he remembers. "Or I would start vomiting blood, or blood would come out when I started shitting and stuff like this. Obviously, this isn't good. I wasn't doing any drugs, I wasn't drinking. I was just sitting programming 15 or 16 hours a day. I'm still having a lot of physical problems. It's the combination of the two diseases that makes it all so scary and dangerous. Either one of them if not treated will result in death."

McKenzie is currently in the precarious position of

having lost his right of access to state healthcare in both Iceland and the UK, and he has exhausted any independent means he may have accumulated. "I ran out of money ages ago," he confirms. Although he's hoping eventually to get back into the Icelandic system for treatment, achieving this is far from straightforward, and his illnesses are not currently being treated.

Some have treated his predicament with incredulity. After all, The Haferl Trio has a reputation for mythologising, beginning with the elaborately fabricated member Dr Edward Moerlenbeck. Others are saluting round. Two benefit gigs were organised in Denmark in February featuring Mego's Pez and others. "It's an old cliché but you don't get to find out what people are like until there's a crisis," says McKenzie. "People that should be helping aren't. People that I've never physically met have done amazing work trying to help me find a way through the legal system and getting money so that I can actually live. These people have been very selfless – amazingly real."

With a renewed sense of purpose, new releases have been coming thick and fast over the last couple of years. In 2002 McKenzie rescued composer Georges Auriac's setting of Tristan Tzara's 1923 poem *La Chanson Dada* from oblivion by arranging it for string quartet, harmonium, harp and voice; and released the uncharacteristically minimal Cleave trilogy comprising music McKenzie originally created as wedding gifts for friends.

In response to what McKenzie sees as new conditions, six 10" records were released during 2003, each on a different independent label. "I realised that people's attention spans have shrunk," he explains. "The amount of time that people look at a Web page is something like 0.3 of a second. What chance do you have of getting anything through?" The quality of attention has also dropped because people are not really doing anything. All the artists I really admired produced stuff which engaged this particular kind of attention. To give an example: a musician like John Coltrane or a writer like Nietzsche – especially their later works – where reading a paragraph is like having several meals all at once. You have to go and lie down for a while it's hard to digest. Nowadays people just sit there going, 'Amaze me, amaze me, amaze me.' That's a vacuous relationship. When you read something by a great master, it's a work... The most expensive thing that there is, is to spend your effort, intention and attention on something consequently."

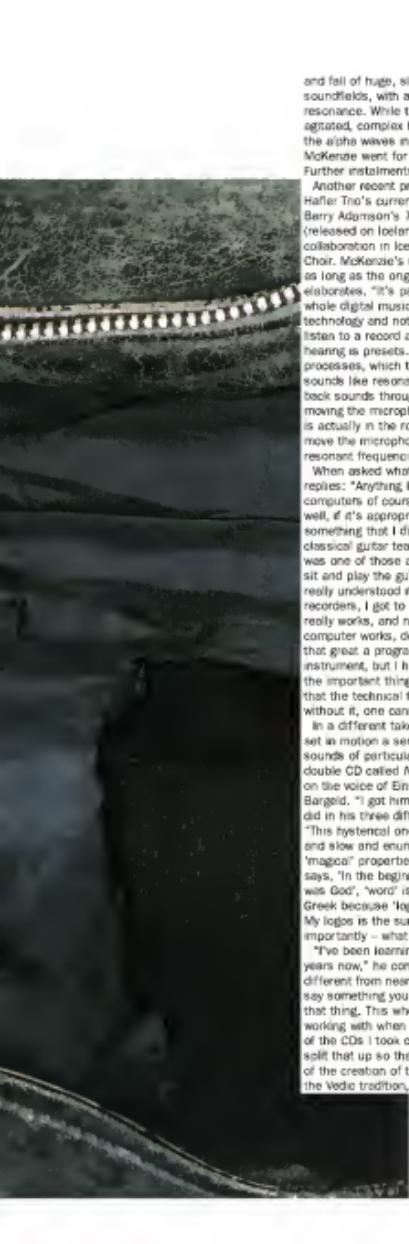
For those who do want a bit more to chew on, there's no better place to start than Haferl Trio's *How To Slice A Loaf Of Bread* triple set on Preston's phonometrography label. His design work alone for the release – lavish bespoke packaging in embossed card – is to a level beyond the imagination of most independents. The music – gut-grabbing, longform drone works with an abrasive edge reminiscent of Tony Conrad's compositions for violin but saturated with dancing overtones and unexpected twists – was developed for a performance in May 2003 set up by label head Wayne Carlsen at the University of Central Lancashire. Over four hours the audience were led between different spaces – an arts centre, a cafe, a pub and a church – and treated to an array of projections, happenings, sound events, tea and toast. The flyer for the event included the following text:

"Three entrances connected by/seven processes at one time/and several locations/viewable by all/intelligible by some/reproducible by none." Together, Ben Green's description of the event on the phonometrography Website, along with the pre-performance conversation and pages from McKenzie's notebook (both reproduced as part of the elaborate CD package), constitute a riddle to be solved. "It was to demonstrate that there are seven laws that govern everything and there are three points of entry into that sequence of seven laws," explains McKenzie. "Each one of those entry points is a kind of shock from outside. These are not empty theories: these are things that I have verified on a very deep level. The keys are all there and it may take many weeks, or even years in some cases, before people get it, before the penny drops. Because they will have to do some work on it. It's not all been provided in an easy answer."

As well as McKenzie's phenomenal output of new recordings, the number of performances has also been stepped up over the last year or so. Most have been developed for a particular location, making use of the opportunities and materials at hand. A performance at the 13th century Clifford's Tower in York (to be released as *Scissors Cut Arrow* in July on phonometrography) featured projections onto 20 foot high sheets of fluttering gauze, and the audience was offered a blue coloured drink which, they were told, would turn their urine blue. At a sound and light festival in Hasselt, Belgium, after appropriate scene setting, McKenzie took a fully clothed person by the hand into an area delineated by a rectangle of ultraviolet striplights and painted them white from head to toe. A set of stilts on the Haferl Trio Website depicts a series of shows on mainland Europe called Light And Joy. They include one that records a man and woman, naked except for top hats, pedalling bicycles towards each other suspended in mid-air, in an illustration of the lyrics to *La Chanson Dada*.

I meet McKenzie in the midst of preparations for his support slots with Einstürzende Neubauten in Europe. Although he once toured as a temporary member of Psychic TV, and as the sound engineer for Clock DVA, the avant rock setting is still a challenge for him as a solo performer. "I'm deliberately putting myself in a situation where I have to respond," he says. Despite critical neglect and frequent misunderstanding, fellow artists have acknowledged the Trio's importance. If being sampled can be considered a compliment, then Jim O'Rourke (on John Fahey's *Womanlet*), John Wall (on Fracture and Stock,hausen & Walkman) have all doffed their caps. Most recently, he was approached by electronica duo Autoshine. "Sean [Booth] wrote to me saying it was a shame that we'd missed each other when they played in Iceland," McKenzie recalls, "and that it would be good to meet at some point and to do something. I didn't know them and so I said, 'This is all very interesting...'. Sean wrote back really pissed off: 'CAN'T YOU TAKE A FUCKING COMPLIMENT?' It got more friendly and we decided to try it. I knew bits and pieces of their work, but they come from an area I have no experience of. Which is what made it so interesting, I think, for both parties." On $\omega 30$ & $\omega 32$, a double 3" CD package released last year, Autoshine's digital finesse approximates one facet of the Haferl soundworld, summing up the rise





and fall of huge, slowly morphing, intricately textured soundfields, with an emphasis on psychological resonance. While the duo stepped away from their agitated, complex hyperactivity and surfed instead on the alpha waves in vast caverns of inner space, McKenzie went for a more hard-edged, digital sound. Further installments are set to follow.

Another recent project allows some insight into The Hafler Trio's current working methods. Pan Sonic & Berry Adamson's *The Hymn Of The Seventh Mission* (released on Iceland's Kitchen Motors) documented a collaboration in Iceland, also featuring The Hljómskálf Choir. McKenzie's remix extended to more than twice as long as the original. "It goes all over the place," he elaborates. "It's partly a statement about how the whole digital music thing is being shaped by the technology and not the people. You can now almost listen to a record and identify the software. All you're hearing is presets. This is not right! So I used natural processes, which the software is emulating. What sounds like resonant filters is actually me playing back sounds through large cardboard tubes and moving the microphone through the tubes. The sound is actually in the room and you can point the tube and move the microphone and it amplifies different resonant frequencies."

When asked what technology he currently uses, he replies: "Anything that I can get my hands on. I use computers of course, but I use lots of other things as well, if it's appropriate. I would not want to work with something that I didn't fully understand. I was a classical guitar teacher when I was 12 years old – I was one of those awful prodigy things – and I used to sit and play the guitar for nine, ten, 11 hours a day. I really understood it. When I first started using tape recorders, I got to understand how a tape recorder really works, and now I really understand how a computer works, down to the bare metal. And I'm not that great a programmer! I'm not playing an instrument, but I have to be good at what I do. That's the important thing: to be so technically proficient that the technical facility can be left behind. But without it, one cannot take the leap away from it."

In a different take on the remix, The Hafler Trio has set in motion a series of works using the vocal sounds of particular individuals. The first of these is a double CD called *Normally* (*Soleilmoon*) based entirely on the voice of Einsürzende Neubauten's Blaxx Bargeld. "I got him to read a specific quote, which he did in his three different voices," explains McKenzie. "This hysterical one; this whispered, threatening one; and slow and enunciated. This record is related to the 'magical' properties of the word. In the Bible, where it says, 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God', 'word' is a very bad translation of the Greek because 'logos' is a meaning, it's who you are. My logos is the sum total of who I am and – more importantly – what I can do. God is a verb."

"I've been learning Sanskrit for about one and a half years now," he continues. "The notion of Sanskrit is different from nearly all languages in that when you say something you are not referring to anything, it is that thing. This whole doctrine is what I started working with when I worked with Blaxx's voice. On one of the CDs I took certain parts of what he said and split that up so that he was actually masking the sound of the creation of the world. The primordial sounds. In the Vedic tradition, sound creates vibration. So it's an

"THE WHOLE DIGITAL MUSIC THING IS BEING SHAPED BY THE TECHNOLOGY AND NOT THE PEOPLE. ALL YOU ARE HEARING IS PRESETS. THIS IS NOT RIGHT!"

intentional act, which brings everything into being. It's not just some natural process that people are formed out of. It's a conscious thing, where when you say something it becomes real. You actualise it by saying it. When you believe something, you create it.

"Even though Björk tries to keep himself out of it, the more he tries to project this persona, the more of him actually comes through."

The next in the series features Swans/Angels Of Light vocalist Michael Gira, and this is to be followed by a collaboration with Sigur Rós' vocalist Jónsi Þangsson. "More than anywhere else I've ever been, Icelandic people do actually have a voice of the place. Whereas an English person or a German person has virtually no contact with the land they're actually living on, these people have a very deep contact with this. And this is very apparent in the way that they sing which is very open-throated. It's not calculated. All of them come out."

"Björk was nearly my daughter in law," he reveals at one point, a tidbit that hints at the incestuous nature of Iceland's music scene. "I was engaged to Björk's mother, twice." But during our seven-hour conversation, McKenzie is more interested in talking about the general concerns that inform his work than he is in gossiping, dissecting individual releases or the intricacies of how he works with sound. Over the years The Hatter Tech's music has been accompanied by a range of texts. Too easily dismissed as nonsense, they are colourful and opaque, with metaphor piled upon metaphor. Every now and again they are frank and self-revelatory, but most require a measure of interpretation.

There's method in the madness. In *Back In No Time*, a small hardcover book published by Stealplatz as part of a package on Beat artist and writer Brion Gysin, he writes of "the initial point of the alchemical process, the 'matina confusa'... the basis of all life". "How do you know he's not a fake?" runs the snatch of ripped-off Hollywood dialogue at the beginning of the All Tomorrow's Parties video. "He looks like a fake."

"Do not look at my outward shape, but take what is in my hand," runs the quote from Sufi poet Jelaluddin Al Rumi that opens the Gysin essay. "These packages are an attempt to get to the stage where other people can take part in the process, where it's not a passive situation anymore," McKenzie explains. "A central concern is that this passivity is not productive at all. It's blind consumption. If you just sit there and consume and you don't do anything, you get fat. Human beings, unlike all other animals on this planet, have the ability to do things consciously. And if we do not do them consciously, we will have them done for us. We need food and impressions."

"But we don't have to process this stuff in an automatic way," he emphasises. "It's important to be aware that there's a different way of doing things. Everybody is shown at some point that this automation, this mechanical way of being, is not the correct way," he declares. "Unfortunately for most people it happens at the end of their life now. They get a serious illness or have a heart attack. This is the only time when they really wake up and see that there's actually something apart from this stuff which has grown around them and which they believe to be themselves."

"That's also the whole point of the sexual trilogy," he continues, "to move beyond these kinds of automatic thinking about something which is not mechanical. This is a very core part of the human being, where a lot of the energy comes from." McKenzie is now working on the third part of his sex trilogy. The first part, *Masturbatorium* (1991), deals with female sexuality; the second, *FUCK*, with the male libido. The third part, which he is resuming after a 12 year hiatus, he says is "for everybody" and is called *I Love You*. "This is not a joke –", he adds by email. When completed, all three parts will be available on phonometraphy.

Anyone on a quest for truth will find the path strewn with mistranslations, burnt books and politically motivated falsifications. "It is said that all properly constructed religions, you can falsify the books, you can mistranslate them, but if it's a real religion, the core of it you can reconstruct," says McKenzie.

"You just have to know where to look. It's not just the Bible: all of these books have been mistranslated at some point by some vested interest, be it the Catholic church, a bunch of mullahs or the Hebrew scholars. But if there is something real there, the real impulse will still be there if you know how to look. But nobody is taught how to look anymore."

In the past, McKenzie has claimed that he spent six months as a Sufi whirling dervish. He has also had firsthand experience of Scientology and has studied Zen. But perhaps the work of George Ivanovich Gurjeff provides the key to understanding many of The Hatter Tech's puzzles. In 1999, an interviewer asked McKenzie, "If there was one person you encountered on your life journey that influenced you to get where you are now, who would that be?" He answered: "Geh. There's too many. Gurjeff, Willem De Ridder [the radio artist and head of Fluxus Europe with whom he shared a legendary house in Amsterdam for many years], Annie Sprinkle [the artist, ex-porn star and McKenzie's partner for a while, with whom he worked on *Masturbatorium*]. But there's such a patchwork of people and events, I can't separate them."

Toddy he says, "I have particular ways of doing things which are shaped by my experience and my history. But more and more I'm removing myself and making a set of circumstances where something is more likely to happen, rather than imposing me on it. Most Eastern paths are based on something which has got nothing to do with personal gain at all. The first thing they say is the individual is nothing – that's Islam, Taoism, all these things. There are many different names for it – dissolving yourself in the godhead, where you return to the source, where 'you' do not really matter. Where the personality dissolves."

"The next part to me is, then you have to build a real 'I', " he continues. "That's not based on personality, or personal gain. It's not easy and it's not letting go, it's not a relaxed thing at all. It's something you have to be working with consciously every day, every minute if you can. It's a work – it's really, really hard work. But hard work is the only real basis for being. You have these tools but you must do something with them."

McKenzie's essay "*Back In No Time: Some Aspects Of Brion Gysin And Suggestions For Use*", is a miniature primer on comparative religion. It came



originally with a double cassette package containing recordings of The Master Musicians Of Joujouka and an interview with Gysin. McKenzie views modern mystical movements positively, as "part of the avant garde of the reformism of everyday life", although "it is the individual's task to differentiate himself from all the others and stand on his own two feet... [ripping off] the potential of the past without becoming ensnared in its limitations."

McKenzie has a special relationship with the works and thinking of Brian Gysin. At one point he was in discussions with publishers Thames & Hudson about writing Gysin's biography, and he worked with Psychic TV's Genesis P-Orridge to make a kit version of Gysin's alpha wave and image-inducing flicker device, the Dreamachine, commercially available, finally succeeding in 1989. One Hafler Trio 10" from 2003, *The Man Who Tried To Disappear*, features two paintings by Gysin and is inscribed, "The Hafler Trio now considers this account paid in full."

"I can't claim to have been best buddies with Brian," explains McKenzie, "but the Dreamachine was a promise that I made to him. That took four years, but I did it. That's been the only time that it's been commercially released. He couldn't do it in his lifetime. He had discussions with the people at Philips to make a bedside device that would put people to sleep, but of course the Dreamachine makes people wake up."

This waking up is, if anything, what McKenzie encourages with his often convoluted and frequently speech-defying beautiful work. "It does allow for the possibility of compassion," he ventures. "Once you understand that you have this connection to everybody else in this essential sense – not in terms of personalities or personal attributes – there is a core humanity that can be worked with and that everybody can respond to. But it's up to you. It's not something that somebody is going to do for you. It's very specific work that you're going to have to do for yourself. You are alone in this. And this is frightening for most people.

"Having reasons for what you do is almost looked down upon now," he continues. "There's a very big resistance to being able to articulate the kind of things I've been talking about. To engineer this consciously is looked upon with a lot of suspicion. You're just supposed to be this sort of free agent that somehow taps into this supernatural power and this music flows through you. But to be conscious about that and to create situations where this can happen in a very conscious way and not just flutter around like some kind of beached whale hoping that something will happen, that's somehow taken as being dishonest or manipulative.

"But actually it's not," McKenzie concludes. "It's the way it used to be. Art was produced consciously for specific reasons. It was meant to be either a way of expressing a relationship to what you might call the divine, or it was a way of approaching that or allowing people to get there. It was completely selfless. Did it work? That was the only criteria you applied." □ How To Slice A Loaf Of Bread parts 1 & 2 and *æ3o & h3e* are out now on phonemotography. Kill The King and The Sea Org are out now on Korn Pleses. Website: www.brainashed.com/h3o. Thanks to Andrew Jacques

CATCHA

IMPROVISING VIOLINIST AND ELECTRONIC SOUND SURFER TAKEHIKO KOSUGI HAS RIDEN THE WAVE OF SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS OF THE PAST DECADE AHEAD OF THE SIGHTS. DISCOVERING HIS 'HETERODYNE EFFECT' OF INVISIBLE WAVEFORMS, HE CO-FOUNDED JAPAN'S FIRST IMPROVISING COLLECTIVE GROUP ONGAKU, AND IN THE EARLY 70S TOOK TO THE ROAD WITH THE LEGENDARY TAJ MAHAL TRAVELLERS. HE HAS ALSO COLLABORATED WITH FLUXUS MOVER GEORGE MACIUNAS, JOHN CAGE AND SONIC YOUTH. ALAN CUMMINGS CATCHES UP WITH KOSUGI ON A RARE VISIT TO LONDON FOR A PERFORMANCE WITH THE MERCE Cunningham DANCE COMPANY

PHOTOS: THOMAS BUTLER



Memory: the fire-damaged music room of a primary school in Tokyo, a couple of years after the end of the war. A piano, half-blackened by the smoke and flames. A boy strikes one of the keys and the piano's warped wood and heat damaged strings resound with a sound that hangs briefly in the air with weird mystery. The visual effect of the blackened wood and keys combine with the unexpected auditory tone of the songs. "Maybe in one sense, the piano had been remade by the flames," says Takehiko Kosugi. "It had been turned into an acoustic object by the event of the fire, an audio-visual object on display. The strangeness of that experience has remained with me."

Composer, performer, conceptalist, improviser, installation artist and violinist Takehisa Kosugi has been an important, though shadowy presence in the world of avant garde music since the beginning of the 1980s. You might be forgiven for not immediately recognising the name, however, as he has long been ambivalent about the value of audio documentation. Consequently, many of his most important and representative recordings have remained stubbornly out of print, much whispered about but unavailable save to those blessed with inordinate luck or very deep pockets. Albums like *Catch Wave* (1975), or those by his peripatetic multimedia improvisation group The Taz Marion Travellers assumed the status of legend among collectors of rock aesthetics, and Sonic Youth's inclusion of his work on their *Goodbye 20th Century* project brought his name to a new generation of listeners. Finally a couple of years ago Kosugi, guided by the increasing number of bootlegs of his work, authorised several official CD releases, bringing the subtle, kaleidoscopic textures of his music once more to the ears of the world. But those records, fascinating as they are, chart only a tiny portion of his unfolding journey through sound as art. His list of collaborators and associates reads like a who's who of the 20th century avant garde – John Cage, Toshi Ohyanagi, David Tudor, George Macanias, Nam June Paik, Joe Jones, Gavan Bryars, Merce Cunningham, Steve Lacy, Don Cherry, Kaoru Abe...

Silping between genre, media and continents, rising and transcending borders and boundaries has been one of Kosugi's raisons d'être. His music, for example in the longform and distinctly psychedelic improvisations of The Taj Mahal Travellers collective, blurs the lines of demarcation between composition and performance, sound and the visual, acoustic and electric, between academic conceptualisation and physical experience. Kosugi's work has always been driven by an unchanging desire to reignite and revitalise human sensibility, to jolt the mind out of its rut through the operations of chance and spontaneity. The strategies he has devised to achieve his ends are core to the experience of the 20th century avant garde – chance, multiplicity, improvisation, indeterminacy, mixed media, the importance of environment and place. In particular, the mysterious "heterodyne effect" created by invisible waveforms has become a touchstone concept of his career.

Last winter Kosugi made a rare trip to London to perform with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, in the towering vacuum of the Tate Modern's massive Turbine Hall on the south bank of the Thames. Kosugi's association with the company goes back a

long way; he first joined in 1977 as a composer and performer, and has acted as musical director since 1995. The company's principle of breaching movement and sound independently (not to mention their eight channel sound system designed by David Tudor), makes it perfect for Kosugi, with his continuing interests in composition, sound design and performance. His role as musical director in fact has little to do with direct control, and more with uncontrol, with safeguarding the independence of dance and music, and making sure that the musicians do not interact too much. For the Tate performance, guest performers Christian Wolff and William Winant each played their own compositions simultaneously with those of Kosugi. Musicians, music and dance are joined only in that they share the same space. But still, putting together the music for such a huge space is a heavy responsibility, and when I meet Kosugi he seems exhausted. In person, he is slight and softly spoken, neatly dressed, with a wave of greying hair hanging over round, metal-framed spectacles. But he still retains some with an easy conviviality that masks a streak of intelligence.

Although Kosugi's music has taken him to well-funded arts venues all around the world, his roots are much humbler. He was born in 1938, the eldest son of a Tokyo glazier. The household was not especially musical, though in the self-improving fashion of the times they possessed a few edifying albums of classical music. The sound of the violin came to appeal, in particular recordings by Mischa Elman and Joseph Szigeti. The first record he bought was Elman's recording of Dvorak's *Musical Humoresque*. Perhaps the intensity of the Russian violinist's unprecedented tonality, its power to focus the mind of the listener on the moment of performance, would be a hint of Kosugi's future development. His own violin playing has rarely approached the sweetness of Elman's, favouring a more bracing, rougher edged tonality. Closer at hand, his father played the harmonica as a hobby, and the young Kosugi soon picked up the instrument himself. Laughing he recalls how, on his annual New Year visits to the local music shop to pick up a new harmonica, he would gaze up at the violins on the shelf above the counter. "They looked beautiful," he recalls, "but they were too expensive and broke up, well out of my reach."

Ironically, electronics and in particular radio waves brought the longing for violin within Kosugi's reach. Around the age of 12 or 13, the many other serious young boys of that age, he became hooked on building kit radios. The mysterious universes to be found inside vacuum tubes and the act of plucking invisible sounds out of the ether expressed a powerful, almost magical fascination. He managed to persuade a classmate to swap an old, unused violin for one of the kit radios. Kosugi fondly remembers his first encounter with the neglected, beaten up instrument. "When I got it there were no strings on it, just the body," he says. "But still the form of it looked so beautiful to me and I was really struck by its visual aspect." This connection between the audio and the visual aspects of instruments and objects later became one of the key impulses of his work, but in the beginning, Kosugi concentrated on struggling to learn how to play the instrument.

school. Faced with the prospect of having to work in the family glazing business, Kosugi was spurred on to pass the entrance exams at his second attempt, and in April 1957 he entered the musicology department of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, popularly known as Geidai.

The late 1950s and early 60s were an exciting time to be an arts student in Japan. As the economy began its leap forward, artists in all fields began to critique Japan's conservative political, cultural and social systems. In the visual arts, the Gutai group had a special fondness for happenings, while groups like the Hi-Red Center (featuring Genpei Akasegawa, Jiro Takamatsu and Natsuyuki Nakamatsu) hijacked public spaces for surreal and provocative performances. In dance, Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ono exploded formalism with the bawing violence and eroticism of their new anikiu butoh form. And in music, composers Toru Takemitsu and Toshi Ichiyang were experimenting widely with new forms of composition and performance. Similar experiments were happening in theatre, literature, modern jazz and film. In late 1958, Tokyo received its own dedicated avant garde art space with the opening of the Sogetsu Art Centre, an avant garde libeibana (flower arranging) school and performance venue, which critic Donald Reiche referred to as "an incubator for modern culture".

One of the characteristics of Japan's avant garde back then was how it turned back to its own past for new inspiration while keeping an eye on developments in Europe and the US. Discovering hidden modes and reusable artistic strategies in indigenous forms was one way of resisting and questioning the nation's contemporary fragmentation towards economic prosperity and questioning the recent militaristic past. At Geidai, Kosugi investigated Stockhausen, Varèse and French musique concrète, though information about American composers like John Cage had yet to filter through. But simultaneously he was increasingly intrigued by traditional Japanese music – especially the elastic conception of time and space known as ma in the music of the noh theatre, developed in the 15th century. He comments, "Almost once a month I would go to listen to noh performances by the Tessendai group. That sense of ma in traditional Japanese music... The sense of timing is different from Western music. In my imagination time seems to stretch and contract. It's not just linear. Today you would say that is relative."

Kosugi's first public attempt at composition drew upon both his obsessions, in a 12-tone piece of imitative noh music for violin, cello and noh's kotsuzumi hand drum, written in conventional Western notation. The first hints of his interest in the environmental and spatial aspects of sound performance also emerged, as instead of having the performers grouped closely together, he chose to place them five or six metres apart. Although the audience applauded it, he himself was not entirely happy. "Within myself I knew that the sounds had to possess a bit more spontaneity," he explains. He felt the performers were too tied to the page, their input restricted to mere interpretation of the composer's written ideas. Traditional calligraphy, where sudden inspiration bursting from the performer's mind through the brush could break down the simple action of

following the physical form of the character provided inspiration. "When you play from a score, the sense of reproduction is too strong," says Kosugi. "I wondered whether there could be sounds that departed from the page, that were more instantaneous and had more spontaneity. Like when I listened to noh music... it's more accidental, like an event, with time being stretched. That was what I wanted."

A class in Baroque music provided the key. The class bibliography listed a German text by Ernst Ferand called *Der Improvisation In Der Musik*. "Just that one word, improvisation, seemed to fly up at me," says Kosugi, and he started immersing himself in jazz. "First the quiet stuff like The Modern Jazz Quartet," he remembers enthusiastically, "then I discovered Charlie Parker and I was totally stunned by him. That spontaneity and freedom, that beauty in the moment." Classes about the indeterminate nature of Indian music provided another clue. Kosugi immediately hooked up with a sympathetic cellist and musicology classmate called Shuko Mizuno (who later composed a three hour symphony for 700 performers), and the two started improvising regularly. Their classroom sessions soon progressed to incorporating ideas of chance, tape music and objects sonores, and started to attract like-minded students like future Fluxus member Melo Shimura. One day Mizuno brought along a friend called Yasunao Tone, who graduated in Japanese literature at Chiba University. Tone was deeply immersed in dada and surrealism, and he soon threw himself wholeheartedly into the proceedings, stamping around in wooden geta sandals, hollering and blowing up an unimusically storm on sax. Kosugi recalls, "The fact that he couldn't play technically made him sound even better, because he could make those chance sounds that a schooled musician has lost access to. Musicians become controlled by their sense of tonality, but he didn't have that and could play noisy from the start."

In 1960, they christened themselves Group Ongaku – in effect Japan's first group dedicated to collective improvisation. The decision to use the word ongaku, meaning music, was an iconic bit at the conventionalised expectations of music composition and performance according to the European model. If anything, the group were aiming at a variety of 'anti-music' which, as Tone put it in an early manifesto, would strangle the "freakish crossbred pet" of conventional musical tonality. Their methodology involved rigorously avoiding melodic and rhythmic patterns as instruments both conventional (piano, cello, drums) and unconventional (vacuum cleaners, electronics, tapes) merged in a gloriously messy freeform amalgam. As a demonstration against conventional restrictions it is wholly successful, the music's meaning and significance almost wholly contained within its methodology. The group's first and only concert took place at the Sogetsu Art Centre in 1961, and was an immediate success, bringing them to the attention of composer Toshi Ichiyang who had just returned from the US, bringing back news of Cage's work. As a curious sidebar to Kosugi's experiments with electronics and tape music, around this time he was employed as a sound effects assistant on *Astro Boy*, Japan's first animated TV series.

The following year, the Sogetsu Centre invited Cage





and David Tudor to Japan for several performances. Kosugi was in the Tokyo audience and he and Tone performed at a welcoming party for the Americans at butoh dancer Tatsumi Hijikata's atelier. Cage's and Tudor's 1962 performances had a huge impact upon the Japanese avant garde, to such an extent that they became referred to as the "Cage shock". Kosugi also vividly recalls them, particularly the premiere of *0'00* - where Cage "was sitting at a table on stage and writing, with glasses on and an ashtray beside him. He was writing and there was a contact mic attached to the pen, and another on the table so every sound he made when writing was extremely loudly amplified, each pen stroke. And occasionally he would smoke... He must have had his glasses smoked as well because every time he would touch them too there would be a huge sound. All his actions were thus linked to sound, very loudly amplified sound. I can't recall the exact instructions but they had to do with your daily discipline - heavily amplified. It had to be something other than music. Not playing an instrument but performing some everyday action. For John, composing was one of his everyday disciplines so that was what he was doing. And what he was writing at that performance was the work *0'00* itself." At the end of the piece, Cage marched down into the audience and handed the completed score to Ichiyaneji and his then wife Yoko Ono. What struck Kosugi most about the performance was the beauty of its conception and how an everyday action could become a performance.

The performance confirmed Kosugi's intuition that improvisation and 'event music' was what he wanted to be involved with. He explains, "Gradually I moved from events where music was the focus to event-based music where it was the encounter and the relationship between sound and the environment. From music event to event music." He had been working on a number of these solo 'events' since 1961, pieces like *Miroko*: "Wrap a live microphone with a very large sheet of paper. Make a light bundle. Keep the microphone live for another five minutes".

The ideas were pure Fluxus, and Ichiyaneji introduced Kosugi to the movement's leader, George Macunias. Kosugi sent him a couple of works, which were performed at Fluxus events in Europe. In 1966 Macunias invited him to New York. During his two year stay he hooked up with leading event genre figures like Nam June Paik and scandalous naked cellist Charlotte Moorman, though his decision to play a Moorman event led to Macunias immediately booting him out of Fluxus. Elsewhere in the city, La Monte Young was living on a different temporal plane by his own 25 hour clock. Kosugi was deeply impressed by Young's all night Theatre Of Eternal Music performances. He recalls, "On one level there'd be Tony Conrad and John Cale, and then sitting on a level above them would be La Monte and his wife Marian Zazeela. They'd do these droning performances, using voice and string instrument that would continue for hours and hours. The performance was amazing. La Monte referred to his music as a 'kinetic environment' and it went on so long... The audience would lie down on the floor, their concentration would sometimes be on the music, sometimes elsewhere, or they'd go outside and come back later. The music became an environment - and I really liked how the whole thing functioned."

It's not just sound, it's the whole environment that you experience and you can feel it on your skin. It's the entirety of the experience, and within that sound is just one moment. That environment is created by all kinds of things that are invisible to the eye, the wind for example, which act upon it. Japanese wind chimes are often made of glass and they are beautiful to look at, so there is an enjoyable visual moment, a visual factor there as well. It is that sense of totality, where everything exists in a state of interdependency — the sense of existence I get from that is greater than when there is just a sound echoing in a space."

Kosugi has continued to expand the heterodyne concept. In 2002 he created a sound installation titled *Heterodyne II* at the Museum of Modern Art in Kamakura. The piece uses four wall-mounted rotating fans with attached speakers playing back a vocalisation by Kosugi. The fan blades reflect the sound in different directions, their differing speeds and cycles of rotation setting up a heterodyne analogy phasing effect, which is perceived by the ear as movement. Kosugi enthuses over the electric fans, referring to them as "great performers".

The heterodyne principle and expanded concept of it also played a part in Kosugi's best known group *Taj Mahal Travellers*, which he started in 1969 after his return to Japan. Keen to reintroduce a human element, in 1972 Kosugi devised a system of low frequency oscillators and voltage control filters that allowed him to convert sounds from his violin into a slowly undulating wave. That wave could be combined with others through a multi-channel sound system to create, in Kosugi's words, "heterodyne analogy" third waves. Deciding to link "the original radio frequency heterodyne principle" with his old enthusiasm for improvisation, Kosugi co-founded a group of disparate young talents from the worlds of contemporary music, graphic design, free jazz, electronics, and film. The seven person group specialised in very long, rhythmless improvisations that fused violin, trumpet, stones, bass clarinet, homemade stringed instruments, shakers, contrabass, electronic modulation, Buddhist chanting, voice and more into a deeply flowing, electroacoustic third eye drift. Visual projections and incense were an integral part of the intermedia mix. They usually played sitting down, and members were free to come and go. In effect, the group became the environment. The music was open enough for them to be welcomed at contemporary music concerts, and they were regulars at free jazz venues and rock festivals.

But the group really came into their own at open-air events in parks, reservoirs, snow-covered mountain slopes and seashores. Relishing the discipline that nature imposes, Kosugi remembers one particular concert, at Oiso beach to the south of Tokyo in the middle of winter. "It was just after a major storm had passed by and the waves were really high, great waves. We arrived at the spot, at the seaside just before dawn, in a bus. We'd hired a bus and advertised for an audience to come with us. It was still pitch-black, the sea was dark, and we rigged up electricity from somewhere and switched on the lights. Suddenly you were able to see the sea. At the time we had a film of waves at sea, and we always used it during our performances. We brought this with us to

An even more important link was with Kosugi's next door neighbour in New York, Fluxus artist Joe Jones. Jones had a fascination for toys and all kinds of electronic odds and ends, which he would fashion into striking music machines. Knowing that Kosugi was using a practice violin fitted with a contact mic and wired up to a radio amplifier, Jones generously brought him a wireless guitar microphone he had found in a local electronics shop. One day while practising, Kosugi discovered that if the wireless mic got too close to the amp, it produced a high-pitched sound, which he could vary by moving closer or further away. With his background in radio electronics, he soon worked out that what was happening was an example of the super heterodyne principle. Both radio waves were beyond the range of human hearing but when they came together, the slight difference between them produced a "third wave" — a sound wave which was most definitely audible. The discovery excited Kosugi immensely. He exclaims, "I discovered this system totally by chance, but I realised that here was a way to create something that would link sound with the physical environment." Kosugi had advanced upon a practical way to change movement into sound, to turn environmental factors into a musical agent.

The discovery of this heterodyne principle led to the creation of Kosugi's signature piece, *Catch-Wave*. About the original 1967 version, he says, "I bought several transmitters and several radios and hung them from the ceiling. They were hung close enough together that the waves would cause interference." The piece had a visual element too, a suspended toy projector borrowed from Joe Jones that projected a slide of a dinosaur on to the wall. As people moved in and out, moving around the space and creating air currents, the transmitters, radios and projector all moved slightly, images and sounds in constant interactive motion. In a slightly later version, the visual element was removed and an electric fan added to guarantee sufficient air currents. The scope to substitute the improvising human performer with an electric device was a tantalising possibility, one that Kosugi went onto explore in later pieces that utilised the heterodyne not in its original, technical definition but in an expanded conceptual way.

For many who have experienced *Catch-Wave* performances (particularly the Mono-Dharma variation which adds wave projections and live electronically modulated violin), in the interaction of invisible phenomena such as electrical, light and radio waves or the motion of the wind, there is a sense of the miraculous, of unseen forces working beyond human consciousness. It can be an overwhelmingly sensual, almost religious experience. Kosugi, however, is anxious to refute the suggestion: "I don't like to talk about this in terms of mystery," he counters. "For me, it is very concrete phenomenon. It is about visible and audible fields of light or sound being created by the interaction of other invisible phenomena. It is about the relationship between things."

But he is prepared to admit that the multiple interactions of different waveforms can create an expansion of one's whole experience. He links it to a heightened awareness of one's physical environment. "For example, that high ringing sound you get from wind chimes in the summer, it feels really refreshing,





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the seaside, so you had the actual waves, then these images of waves being projected above... It was absolutely freezing and we were shivering as we were playing. But there was a sense of reality about the performance that had nothing to do with how well we were playing – we were beyond that; the relationship between us and the environment we were playing in. And that was great, even if the music wasn't being played perfectly. It was really reflecting, that place and the music... Nature and huge waves crashing on to the beach, and we had loudspeakers set up. Six of us playing away, and the sun gradually begins to rise over the sea and you gradually begin to see through the darkness. And as the sun came up the movie we had been projecting on the screen gradually faded from view... there was an overlap. That relationship was marvellous, the audio-visual aspect. And then the actual place, at the seaside. Everyone was shivering from the cold, but still being moved by the time and the place."

A year later, following a fundraising concert at the Kokueikan Ice Palace, six members of the group took off to Europe, initially to play at the Utöpe & Visions festival in Stockholm. They ended up playing their way across northern Europe, hanging out in squats and meeting artists and fellow travellers like Don Cherry. One member, Yuko Tsuchiya, remembers the time as not quite the idyl it sounds: "A time of idleness, no fucking bread and, of course, no cigarettes." With little else to do, Kosugi and another member Ryō Kölle formed the quartet Transition with Belgian composer Jacques Bekaert and pianist Michel Herr. Some Travellers drifted back to Japan, while Kosugi, Kölle and Yuko Tsuchiya decided to head overland for the Tohoku itself in a beat-up old Volkswagen bus, their journey captured on a rarely seen film. In 1972, Kosugi, Kölle and Tsuchiya were back for acclaimed shows at the International Carnival of Experimental Art at the Roundhouse in London. The group's journey finally came to an end in 1976.

Throughout his career, Kosugi has continued to be involved in free improvisation, sometimes he says almost against his will. Something would always pull him back to it. Looking back over the years, he mulls over this conflicted attraction, and what the heterodyne concept has meant for his improvisatory playing. "I started out from improvisation as a way to escape from certain fixed positions," he explains. "I needed to liberate music from my own control, but improvisation is conversely still controlled by your playing habits. Improvisation is an immensely complex idiom, and the freer you become the more of a problem it is." He found his solution in the unexpected discovery of electronic waves. "What electronics demonstrated to me was the movement of electronic waves, separate from myself," he concludes. "Developing a relationship with those phenomena is a way to transcend your self. Bringing your own music into contact with that created by electronic waves, that action in itself creates a heterodyne... My own understanding is of it as 'hetero' and 'dyne', literally two different powers that create a third wave. And through that I feel that I have been able to avoid the personal habits that plague improvisation." □ Thanks to Eric Lanzafots, Gregor Meyer and Koichiro Sakamoto

**THE
CF**





SONG

IN THE ONGOING WAR ON POP, SONG IS THE FIRST CASUALTY. IF IT NEVER FINALLY CROAKED, DESPITE THE TENDER MINISTRATIONS OF SONGSTERS LIKE NICK CAVE, ARTO LINDSAY AND WILL OLDHAM, THE SONG WAS IN A POOR STATE OF HEALTH EVEN BEFORE THE WORD WAS CUT UP AND UNGERMONIOUSLY DISPATCHED IN THE REALM OF TECHNOLOGICALLY DRIVEN MUSIC, HOWEVER PARALLEL TO THE ROOTS RESURGENCE BEGUN BY THE REISSUE OF HARRY SMITH'S ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC, THERE HAS BEEN A RENEWAL OF INTEREST IN SONG, ALLOWING LAPTOP SONGSMITHS LIKE JUSTIN NORRIS TO FLOURISH. ALONGSIDE THESE OUTSIDER SINGER-SONGWRIGHTERS LIKE DEVENDRA BANHART, HERE THE WIRE SOULD SERENADES THE SONGS THAT BREAK THE MOULD, FROM ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO TO HANS ZENDER AND ALL POINTS IN BETWEEN, WHILE ON PAGE 52, DAVID TOOP APPEALS AGAINST THE DEATH SENTENCE HE DELIVERED HIMSELF ON SONG IN THIS MAGAZINE 12 YEARS AGO



ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO "THEME DE YOYO"

Recorded in Paris, this fiery nine minute epic is quite different from 1970-era Art Ensemble of Chicago's searching explorations of sound and texture. Instead it anticipates the sly subversions of genre the group sometimes explored later in their career. "Les Stances à Sophie" shows the AACD revelling in the structures of song form and pushing them to a joyous limit. Don Moye and Malachi Favors lock it into an intense, pulsating groove and the brass ensemble playing, teetering on the edge of chaos, is superb. But the song idea on the massive, gospel-hailing presence of Fontella Bass's voice, which surpasses her performance on her "Heeaus Me" in, the lyrics, written by arranger Norman Beasley, are full of perverse contradictions. "I'm a yo-yo / I'm a yo-yo / I'm a yo-yo / I like the song" is my favourite, but what follows: "Your body's like Clemensberg/Claudius from me skin" – is almost as strange. It's a song of anguish and disillusionment, albeit with the fervour of Bass's voice bringing out a fissile of surreal erotic delight in such lines as: "For your love is like an oil well/Dig, dig, dig it". AACD were always great at having their cake and eating it – showing the artifice of soul but playing their instruments with soul at the same time. (WM)

DEVENDRA BANHART "COSMOS AND DEMOS"

FROM OH ME OH MY... THE WAY THE SUN GOES BY THE SETTING DOGS ARE DREAMING LOVINGSONGS OF THE CHRISTMAS SPirit (YOUNG GOD CD) 2002

This 23 year old protégé of Swans' Michael Gira possesses the cracked falsetto voice of one who has crossed over beyond the world of art and is not about to sing again. He has seen there. Like his own Kandinsky illustrations that cover every sleeve, Texas born Banhart's acoustic guitar weaves spiraling rhyme while he sings descriptively innocent ditties, childlike rhyme and observation shot through with just the right amount of reinoach and insight. Here's hoping he never resorts to big budget recording. The tape occasionally flutters, and on most of the below-the-minute songs on this record he invades his man's personal space, his breath burrowing against the electromagnetic field like an overheated animal behind glass. The tune is punctuated by a distant and mysterious whisper. This is torosong, alive to the tug of blood in the veins. "We never told this story to another living soul, for fear it might awake and the story would unfurl" – don't we require such latent, coded power from every song we hear? (RY)

BJÖRK "ARMY OF ME"

FROM POST/TELEGRAM (ONE LITTLE INDIAN/ELEKTRA CD/LP) 1995/1987

If you were to seek out the one song that marks Björk's coming of age as a singer-songwriter and suggests most about her remarkable synthesis of styles, it is "Army Of Me", the lead-off track on her second album Post. Co-written with Bob Stipe's Graham Massie, it put aside her initial casting as a victim of the perky father-state hinted at in her earlier group Sugarcubes' "birthday", renamed in her role as Selma in Lars Von Trier's film *Dancer In The Dark* and remade her as a fierce Icelandic hellion, a biomechanical sexual nemesis. No wonder they titled it for the Rank Orléan playbill, been bugged up in the memo, it's her most powerful song. The beats are weighty Industrial disco, the lyrics are decidedly third strike – "Army if you're gonna cross me now/You'll need an army of me". An "Army" might sound dis-individualised and as mass-produced as those clunkly beats, an "Army of me" was something else entirely. (BK)

PETER BLEGGAD "A REAL SLAP IN THE FACE"

FROM KING STRUT AND OTHER STORIES (VOICEPRINT CD) 1990

An incomparable lyrical with an unsurpassed grip on the pleasures of narrative, Bleggad is capable of intricacies worthy of Raymond Roussel and equally adept at condensing complex matter into sparking black holes of cartoonish brevity. Here his boy meets girl scenario takes the form of a radically foreshortened soap opera, complete with love, interest, theft, murder and betrayal, entirely emotionally convincing, witty and crass. Then he outwits himself by ending with a Boggart's foot in the door before the girl's eyes, a swirl of thwarted hopes and brutally suggests the other, occluded, sadistic limits of the songwriter's control of the listener's own expectations: "This story doesn't have a happy ending/I've said all I'm gonna say/The characters are digging/Don't abandon us like that/What did we ever do to you to be treated this way?" The mechanics of the song form are sardonically exposed, generating new and unforeseen effects, leaving the listener to deal with a punchline that seemingly hovers outside the narrative frame, vulgarly novelistic effects are realised in a mere three minutes. (EB)

DAVID BOWIE "BE MY WIFE"

FROM LOW (EMI CD) 1977

Low stands as the best of Bowie's albums and "Be My Wife" is its strongest moment. The phrase, "Sometimes you get so lonely" is a well-ingrained cliche, but Bowie's version makes the word, capturing more of the blessed mood of Cold War displacement than anything else on the album. "Sometimes you get nowhere", echoes the first line – now the singer is static as well as isolated. The next lines are an empty brag ("I've lived all over the world/You've lived every place"). The ear – and the singalong voice – insists, "everywhere", but "every place" refuses the homecoming of rhyme. The world-weary chit-lits in the second verse add, over 12 aching monotonies crooned over a vanfuus Ambient disco backdrop, the song subsides into masculine vulnerability: "Please be my wife/Shame my life/Stay with me/Be my wife". The obsession-tinged neediness is set against the resolution of "wife" – the song's first rhyme. Then the song loops. Exactly the same words are repeated. The repetition sucks the caricaresque out of the song, the same adoration of another, stranger in another bed. It closes with a return to its first, lonely, longing, and the final, final, lonely, loneliness. The music fits the lyric like a soft, water glove, the tension between the same paces of rock and early Ambient that informed *Nouvel*, big treasures of Bowie and Eno at the time. But the hollow heart of the song lies in the dead snare sound. Its relentlessly bachelor beat holds out no hope for the singer of the song. (WM)

Alice Coltrane



Tim Buckley

**ALICE COLTRANE**

FROM UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS (IMPLUSED CD) 1971

Bhajans, traditional Hindu devotional songs of prayer, place lyrics at the forefront, repeatedly invoking God by various names like the "Hare Krishna" mantra, the ancient bhajan "Sita Ram" derives its strength from the sonic vibrations of its words. On *Universal Consciousness*, Alice Coltrane revisits both "Hare Krishna" and "Sita Ram" without resorting to the words crucial to their efficacy. Nor does she cling strictly to the melodies associated with each song. Instead, she extracts their perceived samskritis, transforming abstract feelings into exquisitely textured, unearthly jazz. On "Hare Krishna," a magnetic blast of arpeggios (transcribed for Coltrane by Greenwich Village establishes the mood). "Sita Ram" is more surreal in its environmental textures, less cerebral, with an instant bhajan aura drawn from it. An immediately meditative feel, Coltrane's cascading harp and organ figures cheekily melt into each other, and the other instruments are soft and subtle, gently accented but never eclipsing Coltrane's solos. In that sense it follows the bhajan tradition of one voice passionately leading a congregation. (GD)

TIM BUCKLEY

"STARSAVALOR"

FROM STARSAVALOR (RHINO) 1971

Tim Buckley's output became progressively more eccentric from his mid-60s Elektra debut, and the title track of his stringed LP aimed straight for the atavistics. A multi-tracked voice-led piece, he yodels and vibrates wilyo scraps over an Echoed choir of his own chilling wordless vocal sounds. Perhaps taking a cue from The Beatles' "Revolution #9," this piece is firmly in the world of the avant garde rather than rock. Bounding much like a Stoogesian. Leda or Nero vocal piece, in some ways it prefigures Diamond Gallo's early work more than Peter Waynes or Cathy Berberian are usually thought to. Here in particular Buckley set a standard for vocal experimentation in the singer-songwriter world, which virtually no one has even fit to chase after. (GD)

COL

"BROCCOLI"

FROM MUSIC TO PLAY IN THE DARK (CHALICE CD) 1999

Col have always made music to play in the dark. Their songs are lumen, howled by a lone-wolf in the haze. The nine-minute epic that is "Broccoli" consists of three cycles working independently of each other, like three slowly rotating cogs that occasionally overlap. A repeated sample of a male voice humming operatically provides the continuous background for the performance. Coltrane's high pitch is a joy of vocal clarity, stratospherically sustained. His advice: "Use words from the deepest/for your dreams, especially broccoli/their sensible shoes and always say thank you/Especially for the things you never had." A deep voice repeats this mantra of politeness and nutrition simultaneously while added echo effects that leave the voice sounding like it's coming from beyond the grave. More of a hymn than a song, "Broccoli's" microscopic observations make you ponder the possibility of finding universal truths and even salvation in the structure and colour of a vegetable floret. (AVM)

PHOTO: RUTH STONE & MARCUS PFEIFFER SOURCE: REX FEATURES

GIGGONE YOUTH

"INTO THE GROOVY!"*

FROM THE WHITE ALBUM (BLAST FIRST CD) 1988

In their incarnation with Mike Watt as Giggone Youth, Bonz Youth explored their fascination with the pop standards of one Madonna Louise Ciccone - her iconic status, and her omnipresence in popular culture. "Into The Groovy!" was first released as a single in 1986, though Giggone Youth's only LP, The Milky Album, also included the song. More than simply an ironic lo-fi cover of a pop song, with tongue planted firmly in cheek, it engages with the conflicted feelings of pop music - its tremendous personal immediacy and empathy, but also its distanciation and emotional distance. Thurston Moore's hilariously deadpan, off-key singing borders on bored karaoke, but at other times his rendition of lyrics like "You've got to prove your love to me" sounds uttarily convincing. The crashing guitar chords and treated bassline lend a dark menace to the song's sense of playful fun. The original hit, however, the cover art is its otherworldly use of disintegrated vocal samples from Madonna's original. It almost sounds like Moore is trying to interact with the Material Girl via a garbled radio transmission, and in a few fleeting moments, their voices meet and harmonize with each other. (GD)

VIV CORRINGTONHAM & PETER CUSACK

"STOJAN NA STANKA"

FROM OPERET (VENTRICLE CD) 2001

Wops and stutters of East European cimbalom and vocals set the stage for Viv Corringham's thoughtful rendition of a beautiful traditional Macedonian song. Then Cusack's bouzouki (Greek lute) plucks out the tune. The Ambient chords in the background occasionally seep alarmingly into electric chicanes, and what becomes apparent in live performance is that the bouzouki is sounding up as a trigger for a laptop's worth of samples, all drawn from the same musical area as the song itself. It takes a while to realize that the angle of the bouzouki's neck is affecting the backing, via ultrasound. Corringham handles the vocals with the same authority she has shown on previous albums of eastern Mediterranean traditional song and vocal improvisation. (GD)

CORRUPTED

"SANGRE/HUMANOS!"

FROM LEE WARD ODE OF GUANOS (ING FACT CD) 1999

"Stairway To Heaven" - this 40 minute track occupying the first disc of a double CD set (another 45 minute song makes up the other disc) is the ultimate slow burning Metal epic. A series of森歌, Gothic piano chords, reminiscent of Arvo Pärt, is played softly at first, then filled out with octaves and pulsing chords. Underneath it a low voice intones the lyrics in Spanish, even though the group are Japanese. After 15 minutes the piano part begins to flicker and is replaced by a full-on sludge rock group playing the same chord series in a devastating, wall-to-wall transition. The song continues in a similar pace, until even The Melvins or Sepultura would sound deathly compared to it. The vocals are brought to the fore, rattling the jems in death, guttural pronouncements. Chords build in the background, and near the 30 minute mark the piano returns. For the next quarter hour the track continues to build in density and volume, finally dropping back to the piano for the last couple of minutes. Given its structure, "Sangre/Humanos" could be seen as Death Metal's answer to Steve Reich's Drumming - it's certainly just as hypnotic. Metal as minimalism doesn't get any better than this - AC/DC's "For Those About To Rock" notwithstanding. (AL)



**DIAMANDA GALAS:
PLAGUE MASS
(MUTE CD) 1991**

In Diamonda Galas's *Plague Mass*, the song is sung not to please the dead but to rouse the living, not to ask for mercy but to insist on retribution. Gone are the bells and smells of traditional liturgy, the perfumed copes and the ailing castrato hymnals divorced from the reality of putrid flesh. Instead, Dallas's cathartic performance centres on grotesque blood-smeared rituals, repelling taunts and disobedient blasphemers, given voice in convulsive expletive fits and hysterical ululating tongue. Hysteria is central to her concoctions, and with the *Plague Mass* she reclaims the term "catharsis" as a way of making women as well as emporing men of their voices, a means for purging the tormented as the transmogrified. This mass, recorded at the Cathedral of St John the Divine, NYC, in October 1990, is Galas's curse on the forces that have stood by while AIDS has wrought havoc, opposing them with a cacophony of voices that refuse to rest in peace. Galas's unearthly vocal ability baptising every word in blood and spit. (PR)

EINSTÜRNZENDE NEUBAUTEN DIE BEINDUCHLICHKEIT DES LANDES FROM SILENCE IS SEXY (MUTE CD) 2000

"Die Beindlichkeit Des Landes" is song as elegy and as eulogy. In lyrics heavy with metaphor, Blaue Bergland invokes the spirit of Marlene Dietrich, celle of a long-gone Berlin. Is doing so, he constructs a picture of a cinematic city so rich in history, yet so obsessed with the new and continually mired in a struggle to forget. The square named in the star's memory, Marlene Dietrich Platz in the heart of Postdamer Platz, sportily presents itself as both a gaudy, gleaming mall. The peer running through it is a ghostly palimpsest, "ein schauerlicher Remarque," remembers Bergland. "Meine meine meine-Marienchor," he intones, his painful exorcism and repetition making "melancholia" almost blend into "Marlene". "Marienchor floats over the new city," he sings, Marlene being the ghost who embodies that melancholia. She hangs with widespread wings/Skeleplus and with frozen gaze, "he continues, conjuring visions of the famous gilded angel statue that watches over the city, and of Dietrich's haunting role in the Weimar cinema classic, *The Blue Angel*. The song ends with an angry rhetorical chorus, "What is the lay of the land?" The group sound like they are grousing for answers. (GD)

KURT ELLING "RESUME IN THE AIR" (BLUE NOTE CD) 2000

Not even those who have hailed Chicago born Kurt Elling as the future of jazz singing have noted a snarl, possibly mystical coincidence in his biography. Elling was just quivering in the womb, the moment when hearing begins, when John Coltrane died on 31 July 1967. Elling's obvious forbearers are Mark Murphy and Frank Sinatra, but listen to his harmonic invention, his ability to stretch not just the expressive scope but the whole tonal dimensionality of a song, and it's clear that Coltrane was another of his teachers. It's typical of Elling's originality that he didn't choose to retrace the opening movement of *A Love Supreme*, with its already famous "Acknowledgement" chant, but the second part, which demands a vow of commitment to a course of spiritual discipline. That he understands both its emotional and musical dynamic is evident from his recording. The immediacy is striking in line and the lyrics, which invoke just about every word good and bad in the language. Elling's mood most especially conveys that in Coltrane's invention of the Supreme Being as a benign but ultimately rather amorphous force, Elling puts the Word to a jazz chaser rather than setting words from it. His improvisation is a jazz chaser, in a market flooded with "jazz" singers who do little more than regale old cats, he is laying a fundamental branch of the art into new realms. (BM)

BILL FAY "COME A DAY"

FROM TIME OF THE LAST PERSECUTION (DEBAM LP) 1991

"Come A Day" is the penultimate track from the doctored second LP by this truly mystifying British singer/conteur – a lost soul who resembles Charles Manson on the cover. Starting with plaintive piano and trumpet, it continues the album's themes of penance and apocalypse, with Fay singing of day "when we will not prevail/No nation will prevail", as if to end the world as we know it. Directed by producer Ray Russell and the other members of his free jazz group, who back Fay on this LP join in one by one, Russell's guitar tones become increasingly distorted until he finally goes berserk, with the other instruments joining him in a free jazz rave up while Fay continues his solemn chord progression at the piano. It all ends abruptly after two and a half minutes. The whole album is an experiment with Fay's delectful, introspective piano-based tunes occasionally erupting into the freeform electric chaos associated with Russell's group, a hybrid most perfectly realised on this track. (AL)

HARRY OSONO AND THE YELLOW MAGIC BAND "SHIMENDOKKA (CROSSROADS SONG)" FROM PARASITO (ALFA CD) 1991

Haruomi Hosono began the 1970s playing bass and singing in the pioneering Japanese lounge rock outfit Hippie Endo, and ended the decade by forming the hyperactive Willow Magic Orchestra, whose witty Techno-pop invited that of Kraftwerk. In between, Hosono released three "ay sauce" albums of tightly rocking, exotic music that feature the carry-on sexiness of the Japanese rock of the 1970s, and a more stereotypical image of the Orient. For "Shimendokka", his usual sophisticated groove supports a superb island of Caribbean steel pans and stomp of that art synthesiser, as he imagines himself setting out on a journey west, to meet God in India. By this late stage in his exploration of exotica, Hosono has moved beyond Martin Denny's jungle manbo-jumbo to create a form of Buddhist prayer in a pop song, while reflecting on his own journey as a Japanese musician working with Western forms. (CB)

THE INCREDIBLE STRING BAND

"A VERY CELLULAR SONG"

FROM THE HANGMAN'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER
(ELEKTRA CD) 1998

Mike Heron and Robin Williamson's most enduring collaborative achievement, *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*, is a byzantine of singularities and exceptions. Heron's "A Very Cellular Song" is the collection's boldest declaration of magnificence. It's a dense, 13-minute collage of droll, deadpan observations, stories and settings, from sunburst instrumental stiching but dressed in blankets unorthodox and still fresh arrangements, mixing colours of harpsichord, organs, pipes, guitars, mandolin, jew's harp, kazoo, handclaps and archaic fiddle across the song's unfolding. "Armobobs are very small," interrupts vocalized Licorne McKeithie at a key point in its cellular proliferation, and Heron invites listeners to "feel the energy projection of my cells." Interconnectedness within diversity is the substance and structure of the composition. Its mystical pronouncements are embedded firmly among images of everyday physicality and commonly shared relationships. A surprising ingredient early in the song is lengthy quotation of "I Bid You Goodnight". Heron picked it up from a celebrated recording by Bahamian songstress Josephine Spencer and The Pindar People and integrated it ingeniously within the twists and turns of his own vitalized hymn. (AC)

JANDEK

"I NEED YOUR LIFE"

FROM PUT MY DREAM ON THIS PLANET
(CD ROMWOOD CD) 2000

The three albums of unaccompanied vocals the artist known as Jandeik released between 2000 and 2004 are the most emotionally tormented entries in a book catalogue predicated on personal revelation unremediated by conventional technique, form or presentation. Right from the off, his song forms more closely mirrored the awkward contours of his own being than any conventional structural dictates. His guitar tunings operating according to what sounded good to his ears, his vocal delivery ranging from cataclysm to possessed, his lyrics populated by repeating personal tropes, coded excretions and a levelling cast of people and places. His work readily lends itself to division into various phases, as he incorporates new sonic elements as they come or go. But none matches the devastating intensity of 2000's *Put My Dream on This Planet*, especially the opening "I Need Your Life". Jandeik has never sounded so emotionally evocative as he interrupts long bouts of profoundly charged silence with barked threats and creepy pleads, the only framing structure being the huge brackets of stabs and crackle that punctuate every entry, giving the song the feel of a Charley Patton broadcast from the other side. Its entropic hiss works as an integral part of the track, agitating unbridgeable space and narrowing emotional distance, as opposed to that infra-the-fact eutherapeutic device. But if these are blues they're a new bloodless strain. Far from walking like a man, they're unable to get up off their knees. (DW)

ESTHER LAMANDIER

"BELE YOLANZ"

FROM CHANSONS DE TOILE (ALLEGORIE CD)
12TH CENTURY, REC 1988

The blankest culture of the late 20th century was that of historical reconstruction, with its state of deuterogenitalism, war and apocalypse, plague, famine and the proliferation of chivalric teeth. What possible relevance to the approaching millennium could there be for a 12th century queen's searing music? In 1983, French soprano Esther Lamandier reconstructed a set of ancient *Chancons De Toile*, literally embroidery songs. These were sung, without accompaniment, during long, solitary days when well-born women lived in protective custody in their castles; objects of veneration and exulted lust, symbols of linear continuity, the focus of a complicated economic nexus.

Both historical and purely musical factors make songs like "Bele Yolanz" modern and relevant. They concentrate forcefully on the lot of women in society, albeit wrapped in a layer of irony. It's not the loneliness of the war widow or the economic powerlessness of the chateau that they lament, but the threat of violence behind the troubadour love poetry that ostensibly idealised the lady, saving your bones, I save it by force. From the West, we have gone by the ready and undifferentiated, there's no need for the song to end, as it occupies many, many minutes, uncompromised yet associated with embellishment and beauty. Its simple lines are stretched and curtailed with virtuosic trills and melismas. Monophonic singing has never sounded more elaborate and rarely can women have spoken to women so intimately over such stretches of time. (BM)

JOAN LA BARBARA

"ROTTHO"

FROM SHAMMASONG (NEW WORLD) 1998

Many of Joan La Barbara's performances during the 1970s, alone or with the Sonic Arts Union, Steve Reich or Philip Glass, took place in art galleries rather than more conservative concert halls. Not surprising then that one application she has found for her extraordinary repertoire of extended vocal techniques is to paint in sound, adapting insights gained during her conversations with various visual artists. "Twelvewong" (1977), her first composition of this kind, on *Icebox & The Original Instrument* (Lovely Music), is typical in its use of recurrent motifs and textured layering. Duration concerned not as temporal sequence but as a steady absorption of the listener's attention deeper and deeper into the piece's fine detail. "Rottho" (1988) not only evokes the sober glow of Miles Rothko's meditative canvases, but also the luminous source of the Rothko Chapel, a spiritual environment seemingly removed from the sordidness of Houston, Texas. The 26 minute recorded version pulsates with the interaction of bowed piano strings and the carefully modulated wash of La Barbara's marmaked voice. It's a brilliant translation for the ear of the play of light and darkness, a field of serenbe contemplation illuminated with bright overtones gleams. (JC)

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LOW

"DO YOU KNOW HOW TO WALTZ?"
FROM THE CD "SOMETHING IN THE CASE"
(NEDERLAND YARD GDR 1998)

Low's "Do You Know How To Waltz?" begins modestly enough as just another beautiful slow-motion song by a Minnesota indie prover to gleefully expand. But soon after they elected playing it live in 1996, the piece slowly expanded, morphing from a simple five minute tune to a 25 minute soundscape in which the chilly opening chords and risqué ending chords give way to swallow the vocals. In the middle, stretching time as a moving target, Low stretched and pulled the piece until it took on aspects of La Monte Young's eternal drones. That the power of this "Waltz" is unfeigned by such transformations suggests that any song is just a finite slice of an infinite idea. Their openended approach hit its climax in 1998, when Low were joined onstage by Doggedly You! Black Emperor (with each of their nine members entering the fray at different times for an epic 30 minute version that sealed a mountain of escalating sound). Low's Alan Sparhawk has suggested that the song can't stretch any further than that, but Low continue to play "Do You Know How To Waltz?" live, and it remains a prime example of the infinite malleability of song. (MW)

THE MAGNETIC FIELDS

"THE DEATH OF FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE"
FROM THE LOVE SONGS (CIRCUUS CD) 2000

The 52nd offering of 69 on The Magnetic Fields' exhaustive inventory into songs about love, "The Death Of Ferdinand De Saussure" is a twitzy piece, even from the New Yorker group renowned for their arch commentary on what songs may or may not be. Merritt's plot is precise: basso profundo singer has偶遇encounter with founding father of structural linguistics, and, unimpassioned by De Saussure's musings on the unknowability of love (surely a star on the entire oeuvre of Holland/Daze/Holland), shoots him. While Merritt claims his song is a defense of low culture at the expense of high, it's also a comment on the logical impossibility of saying anything about love. The song's title, however, is a misnomer. De Saussure has survived the gunfire and sits a gauntlet hangs over the entire song. That separation infuses much of Merritt's writing and provides its emotional underpin. But there's little doubt as to where Merritt's sympathies lie. Constructed from acoustic guitar, a low loop and the beat hapticness this side of The NYC Peach Boys, "The Death" speaks to a joissance so powerful as to all but erase the song's deliberately execrable rhyme scheme — "De Saussure/so suey/closure/builders". (LG)

Meadow House

"THE HEMIT"

FROM APRON WHISKEY II EP (NORMAN) 2000

At last, just when embryo is ready to overwhelm the keenest of appetites, time comes and the first genius of the century appears: blear-eyed from the doldrums of postmodernism Meadow House is the nom de guerre of 19 year old outsider pop prodigy Dan Wilson. "The Hemit" is a portal to another, singular world, characterized by its utterly naked self-exposure, delineated in a pitiful whine over a backdrop of sanguine pub piano and clumsy homemade instruments. Set in the cupboard under the stairs, where the nameless protagonist is imprisoned, it wings of disappointed transcendental aspirations in tones that are at once deeply comic and truly tragic. The fact that he's been rechristened in an outpouring of the sorts suggestive of the arms of the gods (the film director, the best art, etc.) of a method actor's iron application. Wilson is both the headstrong Metalion Brenda of 21st century teenage angst, an intransigent recidivist who has to be locked away (and would lock himself away in any case), and its over-sensitive Sal Mineo, at odds with socks and sensibility and obliged to collude with the self-degradation that comprises contemporary social intercourse. (EB)

KAN MIKAMI

"BANG!"

FROM BANG! (URC) 1994

By a long way the most powerful, rugged, intelligent and wilfully idiosyncratic singer to come out of Japan's late 1980s and early '90s folk song movement was self-confessed "tiny sumo" Kan Mikami. While his dangerous contemporaries like the Beaten Path and Body Dyslexia were sethethous and socially consciousnesses, Kan Mikami, with his barefoot, clothing, and obscene gestures to true outsiders like the then protégé Issei Nishi Nagayoshi, Red Army renegades and the disenfranchised Japanese-Korean underclass. Even more revolutionary was his adoption of the emotional vocal tonality of enka popular songs — lascivious, nostalgic and, in Mikami's case, rank with a sentimentality that verges on hysteria. For 1974's "Bang!" album, Mikami teamed up with acclaimed free jazz players like Younus Yamada and Akira Sakata. The album's centrepiece is the remarkable title track, a stoked seven minute experimental whirlwind of tape manipulation, scatological blis, and ping-pong-wacked screams. Starting off with a violent, tuneful guitar strum and Mikami's incendiary declaration of "guitar in my right hand, gun in my left," the piece explodes into a cut-up collage of multiple spliced tape loops. The range of material is extraordinary — backwards, sped up and slowed down samples of Mikami's songs, snippets of Japanese folk songs, the folkish impenetrables, a spattering of rock flute, tolling bells, full-on free jazz churning, a wave of Ako Souchi Zawadzkiism. As a musical expression of fractured modern subjectivity, the shattered command dreams of Japan's student movement, and as a last ditch protest against folk's co-optation into the entertainment industry, it is astounding. (AG)

PANDIT PRAN NATH

"MIDNIGHT"

FROM RAGA MALKAWN (JUST DREAMS) 1998

Krishna Hinduism: classical vocal master Pandit Pran Nath's teacher Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan was once asked why he only ever sang two raga. He replied that if one raga could last for ever, it would be better to sing just one. A raga is not a song per se, but a specific matrix of notes and ways of combining and moving between notes, performed at a particular time of day or season. Within this framework, thousands of individual songs or compositions can be constructed. In this 1976 New York studio recording, minimalist composer La Monte Young comes up the tambourine to Theater Of Eternal Music levels of intensity while Pran Nath, at the height of his powers, conjures up the sonic matrix and tale of "Raga Malkawn", a yogi meditating at midnight as beset by Asuras (evil spirits), which he is tempted by before banishing them and returning to his state of illuminated calm. What's remarkable here is the sheer vastness of scale in this "song". For a little over an hour, Pran Nath sings "Ho Krishna Govind Raam", repeating the (albeit mid-tempo) composition's invocation of the Hindu deity, slowly moving into the sounds of the higher notes, taking the listener through the various ghatas (parts) of the composition into ever more intense and ecstatic realms of sound. As one listens, one comes to identify with these sound realms more than one's own body and mind. One wants to stay there forever. If it wasn't for the morning... (MB)

MEREDITH MONK

"GOTHAM LULLABY"

FROM DO-MEIN MUSIC (COM) 1991

In 1995 director and performer Meredith Monk was struck by the thought that "the voice can hold the same rhythmic and sense of movement as a dance or a foot, and then one could find and build a personal vocabulary for the voice just as one makes movement based on a particular body" Thereafter she explored the resonant chambers of the upper body, drawing from this a distinctive language of explicit yet strangely communicative syllables and expressive non-verbal utterances. Her understanding of the dramatic potential of extended vocal techniques had already been registered in her 1970 "invisable theatre" piece *Key* (Lovely Music CD). The title track of *Gotham Music* showed how successfully her evolving musical language could be translated into an extended work for vocal ensemble. The album's opener "Gotham Lullaby", written in 1975, has Monk singing alone over serene repetition of reing piano arpeggios. A beautiful and consoling vocal melody delivered with characteristic precision is interspersed with outbursts of equally precise upper register twizzlers. The latter might suggest a state of vulnerability and agoraphobia to which the protective lullaby is addressed. It's Monk at her most immediately appealing, safely armoring song as theatre of feeling. (JC)

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

"TO HERE KNOWS WHEN"

FROM LOVELESS (CREATION) 1991

My Bloody Valentine's late 80s transition from cute, strawberry-flavoured indie instruments to white hot avant rock Leviathans is among the most astonishing in rock history. It occurred when a personnel shift suddenly enabled Kevin Shields to override MBV's songs with swooping barrages of treated, sculpted guitar, the ultimate rock manifestation of texture's triumph over text. The eruption of sonic extremism reached its zenith on "To Here Knows When", which first appeared on the Tremolo EP. The track is a hurricane of blood reds and molten blues, a front of rock bottom exhaustion, a gang of novices getting the fine sense of instrumentally flaccid sonic fallout. Yet what's most moving is that, even as the chorus line buckles nausically as if under the stress, "To Here Knows When" retains the faintest outlines of a song, albeit one under massive sage, like a seed refusing to be uprooted by a tornado. Blinde Butcher's vocals are enervated, drained and congealed, on the verge of unconsciousness – yet sweetly, strangely, she hangs in there, just. Sadly, this was the last time the malitia was threatened with neophytification. Rock texture has been put firmly back in its place in this era of retro twiddly, the Singer restored to centrality and rude heart. (DB)

NICO

"EVENING OF LIGHT"

FROM THE MARVEL INDEX (ELEKTRA) 1968

Nico's 1966 solo debut *Chelsea Girl* included songs by Bob Dylan, Tim Hardin and Jackson Browne, as well as her Velvet Underground associates and cited predominantly for melodic amiability and harmonic security. On its sequel, *The Marble Index*, produced by Barry Stacks in the guise of Frater Mohave, she was steering by a more distant star. The album's title derives from the William Wordsworth poem *The Prelude*, whose final phrase applied to an Isaac Newton statue. Nico's new recognition of the laws of physics, untempered by the distress and outcasts of her Indian harmonium, are cast in hallowed settings by John Cale's bold, dissonant arrangements. Harmonies open within offhand design resemble scenes glimpsed from visionary cinema. "Evening Of Light" takes us lyrical to the end of time. Nico's dignified intonation carries the freight of meaning with an unfathomability that's matched by the harmonium's steady state. Around her, Cale runs evocation of the lyric's ringing mandolins, strings strummed incessantly and patterned with sombre bass shadows and jagged walls of electric viola. (JC)



Tujiko Noriko

TUJIKO NORIKO

"GIRL MEETS BOY"

FROM SHOJO TOSHI (MEGO CD) 2008

A Japanese expat based in Paris, Noriko writes laptop lullabies that keenly elicit the distinction between a freshly untroubled innocence and the more determined, strong, mostly intransigent, and often free-spirited side of her art. She is dislocated as the falling leaf electronics that washes here her Mac. With Björk, she shares a tendency to force out cadences as if always at the end of her breath, but without any of the bravado or showmanship that drives the Icelander's prattle. Yet the songs don't break down into verse/chorus banality. There is something succulent, fractal, crystalline about the way she moves the narrative forward that's perfectly in tune with the sound generation software that is her only companion too. The Powerbook generation's first anti-diva. (RY)

PHIL OCHS

"NO MORE SONGS"

FROM GREATEST HITZ (EDSEL CD) 1990

Effectively his last work, "No More Songs" finds Ochs (living, voice to profounds and insidious doubts about the validity of his work) reflecting on the nature of the belief that protest songs could not only reflect but begin to truly change the world, in this telepathic he doubts even that anyone is listening. "Hello, hello, hello, is there anybody there?" only called to say "I'm sorry." The journey described in his mature work is one of personal artistic expansion, but it's also a journey across America in time and space, a move from East to West and then, innocence to experience – "The World began in Eden but it ended in Los Angeles" – in which the bigger the distance covered the smaller the world seems to get. Greatest Hits is a song cycle through which America shrinks – and the singer with it till he is found alone, stuck in his last song, a voice in the desert. Ochs killed himself a few years later, but as far as his art was concerned, this was his poignant last word. (EB)

YOKO ONO

"WHY"

FROM YOKO ONO PLASTIC CHINO BAND (MOBILE FIDELITY CD) 1970

"It's not about notes anymore, it's about feelings," Albert Ayler's famous dictum has never been better put, nor practiced by a rock group than here. Over a chugging rock beat and bassline, Yoko screams, screeches, wails and vibrates the word "why" for close to the minutes. Meanwhile, her partner John Lennon's slide guitar playing lingers. Chuck Berry double stops and Sonny Sharrock anarchy together, matching Yoko phrase for phrase. Although rightfully hailed as a No Wave precursor, it's not about deconstruction and reassembly, but about taking the rhythms of 50s rock – particularly referenced in the production's site-back echo on the vox, guitar and drums – to its logical conclusion. "Why" distills rock's essence in pure mania, emphasizing the beat and the shouting, but hearing it from standard song structure. The reduction of the lyrics to a single repeated word may have us think to the like of the Lemmy-Ozzy and then-current Jonov theory as Yoko's Flawless pedigree, but for a song to simply ask, "Why" is also an astoundingly succinct crystallization of rock's primary emotional and political defiance. (AJ)

ANNETTE PEACOCK

"THE CAROUSEL"

FROM I HAVE NO FEELINGS (RONING CD) 1989

Placing Annette Peacock has never been straightforward. A 1960s pioneer with her partner Paul May, of Moog synthesizer in live performance and an accomplished jazz composer, but also a sly lyricist and idiosyncratic genre-crossing vocalist. A string of fine, too neglected solo projects have shown her exploring the capability of jazz and rock stylizations to simultaneously seduce and challenge, a subversive arena persistently tearing apart personal and collective identity along faultlines where politics fuse with the emotions. On "I Have No Feelings," Peacock's voice, bass and keyboard are accompanied by inspired, propulsive and jagged guitars, are accompanied by inspired, propulsive and jagged guitars. "The Carousel," starting with instrumental suggestion of a merry-go-round mechanism, acknowledging fantasy as an essential lubricant for relationships – "The dreams are why/we submit to the lie." Peacock swoops and soars, embracing physical and emotional highs and lows, while piano and electronic keyboard sketch a criss-cross of feelings and perceptions. A brief keyboard esada conveys a wordless elation, accompanied by the whirr of a revolving plastic tube. Throughout Peacock's voice wears the song's melodic contours like a second skin. (JC)

PERE UBU

"MY DARK AGES"

FROM TERMINAL TOWER (COOKING VINYL CD) 1976



New York and CBGB's was crawling with black and tan denim clad skinny white dudes reducing rock 'n' roll to the bone. Up In Cleveland, however, a fat man with an unerring penchant for smiling in press shots fronted Pere Ubu, a group that was identifiably part of the punk and post-punk tradition – raw, disaffected, rambling, guitarless. "I don't get around/I don't feel in love much," wailed David Thomas, like some beached boy. Yet as this song, originally released as a single with "Final Solution" on the Howlin' Werewolves, Usu looks like none of their contemporaries. Theirs is uncannily similar to David Lynch's *Dune* in the physical appearance of their lead players and in the disturbingly familiar/unfamiliar post-industrial terrain they plowed. The very flesh of this song breathes with a flabbergasted existential terror that's palpable even in Thomas's disinterested, phoned-in voxels. Even an ostensibly down the line rock lyric like "I need a car that can get me around" is suddenly unfathomable when Thomas repeats it like a lamentation. Tom Herman's evocative guitar and the rhythm section alone are more than capable of tracking the verses' emotional ebb and turbulent surge. What's most singular and ingenious, however, are Alan Ravanhill's analog synth lines, which, like brainwaves or synaptic bursts of energy, define the mental agitation of the song. (DS)

ELIANE RADIGUE

"MIA'S JOURNEY INSPIRED BY A DREAM"

FROM SONGS OF MILEARPA (LOWLY MUSIC CD) 1997

Milarpa was a legendary 13th century Tibetan saint who, after a youth spent in banditry and pilage, embraced Buddhism, achieved enlightenment and became a wandering yogic. Cray Wisdom master Milarepa taught villagers the dharma by singing spontaneously formed didactic songs known as dohas. Both these songs and the tradition of spontaneous songwriting are alive today in the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1987, Paris-based composer and Buddhist Eliane Radigue, known for her remarkable Just Intonation tuned synthesizer dromedaries such as *Adagio Alt*, produced this remarkable recording, simultaneously in hour plus duration, an English language nervous retelling of part of Milarepa's life story by sonic Arts Union composer Robert Ashley, and a Tibetan language restatement of some of Milarepa's songs of enlightenment. Much of the pieces were taken from Radigue's studio recordings which resulted in Milarepa as a blurred out but crafty old timer in a Spaghetti Western, or a grumpy Southern River Rabbit character. If Radigue's exquisite drone represents the perpetual presence of the infinite and timeless, and the story – the manifestation of relative, impermanent names and historical events within that infinite flow – the songs of Milarepa affirm the possibility of the union of the absolute and the relative in sparks of gorgeous melodic and linguistic form. And this union, as song or otherwise, is what Mahayana Buddhists call enlightenment. (MW)

THE RAINCOATS

"IN LOVE"

FROM TRADE (1979)

If one of punk's nominal goals was shedding the embarrassing excess pounds that rock had accumulated in its middle age, few groups came as close to that ideal as The Raincoats. All female, barely competent and captured on tape in a screedy one-take recording, they were every rocker's nightmare. Joanne's pleading in the male-dominated rock 'n' roll sandbox, The Raincoats' gift was far more lasting than the short-lived Sex Pistols, though equally irrelevant. All of rock's stock female rock angst, stamp, mannerism and self-righteous ridiculous – but The Raincoats' embrace of vulnerability, emotion and anathemism (in a word, honesty) was equally liberating to men eager to ditch their gender's own long accustomed poses. Lyrically an approximate successor to "I Can't Explain" (among others), "In Love" expresses the tongue-tied effects of romance in what was a startlingly new and candid way. Singer Gina Birch sounds almost too flushed, or unprepared, to tell her story, stammering and gasping her way through much of its three minutes. Drummer Palmeiro's rather unsuccessful attempts at timekeeping only underscore the song's subtlety. Here is a message so urgent that it simply can't wait until the group has put in four years of rehearsals before delivering it. (DM)

REYNOLDS

"0.00 (BOLLOMO)"

FROM BOSTON ARADA MCA CELEBRATE PSH
PHENOMENON CD 2009

What would then Chusid make of Miguel Tomasi? Chusid's book *Sounds Like Key Of Purple* is an collection of outside sounds from the Latin American. Staunch Chevy is to Harry Partch, but its tone makes Chusid the PJ O'Toole of off music of dreams, a North American middle class white male (ie the most privileged species on the planet) poking fun at a bunch of freaks stuck so far out on the margins of society they have no chance of ever answering back. Chusid has no problem taking the piss out of mental illness (check his essays on Daniel Johnston and Wild Man Fischer), but maybe even his poison pen would dry up at the prospect of poking fun at the art that emerges as a consequence of Tomasi's Down Syndrome status. "We work with other students who have Down Syndrome [but] Miguel is a unique being, something inexplicable," say Alan Curtis and Roberto Coriazo, Tomasi's partners in Reynolds, the Argentinian group that over the last decade has rippled through the envelope-marked "outlier art" to describe entirely new approaches to sound, performance and life. "It's like another planet," says Coriazo, "another dimension". As Curtis puts it, Curtis and Coriazo might source Reynolds's astonishing inventiveness back to Tomasi's genetic influence, but it is their guitars, sighing and sliding along peculiar microtonal lines, as much as Tomasi's involuntary moaning, that turns this song upside down and into a thing of utterly compelling and unique strangeness. (TM)

TERRY RILEY

"YOU'RE NOGOOD"

FROM YOU'RE NOGOOD (ORGAN OF CONTI CD) 1967

A couple of years after Steve Reich's early experiments with tape loops and time lags, composer Terry Riley was commissioned to produce a theme tune for an experimental Philadelphia night club. This starting exercise in plunderphonics and tape manipulation was the result. A slow, blushing, now-familiar take-on the Moog cuts and loops into his soul mate material. Now, Avantgarde singer RAY (Ray "People Get Ready") Everything, everything starts with the second chorus of "You're no good". At first this tape-based delay system creeps in as a slight reverberation, while he messes with its echo time awhile. As these interventions grow more radical, the delay opens into more confusing and unpredictable feedback patterns, splitting the piece into two alternate time frames, with Avant and his booking group now doubling us on themselves. 13 minutes in, a spiced fragment breaks off and alternates with an electronic alarm signal - time to make for the nearest exit. From here on, we're dealing with a fluttering, faulty memory of the song. If anything of the original song has been saved, it's only by grafting it into the circuits of a robotic inferno. In a final reprise, echo becomes wholly incongruous. A singer enters through one door and three seconds later his double enters through another. Just as they don't recognise each other, we can't piece together what we're hearing. (MTR)

ARTHUR RUSSELL

"THE PLATFORM ON THE OCEAN"

FROM CALLING UP CONTEXT (AMBIKA/ROUGH TRADE CD) 1994, RECD 1999

towards the end of a brief career that would otherwise through No Wave, Biga Drako, classical debt to Philip Glass and the most remarkable underground jazz ensemble bands, Arthur Russell was working on a category-defying collection of songs and freeform effusions for Rough Trade. "The Platform On The Ocean" is the track that most clearly approaches his intention to produce Buddhist bubblegum music, as he once confided to his New York neighbour Allen Ginsberg. A dreamtough and oceanic synthetic baseline and a simple programmed beat provide an ongoing mantra over which Russell's voice floats and fades in and out of view, sometimes layering in oceanic echoes, sometimes playing with a husky bass murmur, shimmering and splitting itself in the ocean of sound. What's remarkable is the way he sustains something as freeform within the automatic constraints of a regular pulse, and how he opens the notion of song and voice into a lay shimmer of syllables and plumes of colour. But there's nothing saccharine here; his decorated song houses on the border between the sweet and the sour, and the song "The Platform" appears elsewhere the other side of summer to claim "I hear the sound of the white cape" from somewhere beyond his body. Towards the end, trombonist Peter Zummo, his long time associate, adds sublime and breezy punches of colour, but waving but dawning. (MT)

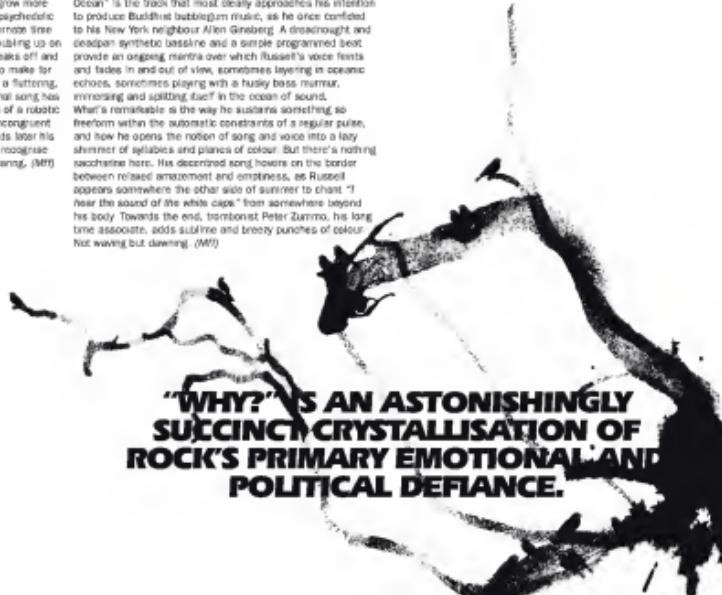
SCANNER

"WARMOL'S SURFACES"

INTERVIEW GUY 2009

Much of what Scanner does has blurred the boundaries of song, but the astringently percussive *Warmol's Surfaces* is the simplest and best realised example of his song as documentary approach. Working from Warhol's suggestion that "if you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surfaces", Scanner shops, processes and multiplies samples of the artist's voice to build ten haunting tracks that treat song like a museum installation, archiving Warhol's mutings made an echoing, vault-like atmosphere. The sleepwalkers call Scanner's work "sound polaroids", or aural snapshots that present reality unfiltered, much like Warhol's squalid paintings. At times, Scanner takes idea to aesthetic extremes, like following a Warhol quote about the sound of the street with actual sounds of the street. But most of *Warmol's Surfaces* is denser and deeper than plain reality; Warhol is less star than ghost here, his voice intermittently puncturing the skin of Scanner's dark atmospheres. *Warmol's Surfaces* treats song as an environment waiting to be explored. (MM)

"WHY?" IS AN ASTONISHINGLY
SUCCINCT CRYSTALLISATION OF
ROCK'S PRIMARY EMOTIONAL AND
POLITICAL DEFIANCE.



SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE "RUNNIN' AWAY"

FROM *THERE'S A MIZ GONE* (SONY CD) 1991

A top 30 hit on both sides of the Atlantic, one of Sly's popper tracks is also one of his more disturbing. Despite the positive message that sets out optimism and hope in each verse, the song is an unrelenting warning on that twisted album. All of its pleasure is in the seedy observation of mental collapse. And its violence is all to do with who's speaking and why. The multi-tracked female vocal line is the sound of someone hearing voices, and every verse contains mocking laughter: "Her ha ha ha... her he her he". The Sly Stone character is in full fight list, his demons: "You're weasing out your shoes," the voices sneer, showing no sign of being left behind. The interplay between rhythm guitar and trumpet is the sunnier flipside to this claustrophobic drama. And the closing trumpet solo lurches into the freedom the instrument's been aiming at throughout. But the song's last line — "A longer trip back home" — gives that longing for escape a suicidal spin. The rhythm guitar is glacial, simple and brilliant, and the drumming fizzes seductively into funk mode during the trumpet interludes. A creamy organ licks deeper in the mix. You can hear the slyly-dippy sound of early rock'n'roll in the background, but it's filtered through a gritt and distorted psychadelic prism. A morbid miniature, striking out a unique musical world somewhere between sussy funk and Easy Listening in under three minutes, the song is haunting in the worst possible way. (MM)

BING SELFISH

"THE IDEAL"

FROM *BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME* (OUT OF DEPRESSION CD) 1994

Teaming up for a love duet with Kaoru Horie (of Frank Chickens), Bing Selfish sets aside his deistic lip curling for an oddly moving hymn to the Soviet Union Youth Communist movement. The couple's love is not for each other, but for the ideal the Komintern holds out for them. They look back to younger, happier days ("We danced, we drank, we sport"), and forward to Lenin's promise that eventually the Western world will go into decline. Meanwhile Selfish's bar band, also named The Ideals, play a sleepy Latin rhythm as the young couple marvel at the scale of their mission to reform the world: "We don't beg! We don't we. Don't steal! We have to live up to the ideals." (CB)

LINDA SHARROCK

"PORTRAITS OF LINDA IN THREE COLORS, ALL BLACK"

FROM *BLACK WOMAN*

(VORTEX/FOUR MEN WITH BEARDS CD) 1969

Linda Sharrock used to be married to the late Sonny Sharrock, free jazz guitarist. They recorded three albums together, the most impressive of which was Black Woman for Herbie Mann's Vortex label, from which this outstanding track comes. It begins with Sharrock singing calypso style with her husband, a calm before the storm as his escalating electric guitar, Ted Daniels' ruptured trumpet explosion and Milford Graves' thunderous drum attack herald Linda's primal scream vocal. The song's title "Portraits Of Linda In Three Colors, All Black" has a Jackson Pollock ring to it, an action song with the wings abstractly hailing her vision like black paint against an unyielding black canvas of institutional power and control. After the first track on the album's voice modulation work with The Omnitone Colours Quartet in 1968, Linda Sharrock abandons words and throws herself into music imposed by her all male group. Her vocal emulates the black struggle desperately trying to be heard over the era's unceasing bombardment of civil unrest, war and poverty. It was also about being a lone woman trying to stand up for her political and creative beliefs in a man's world. On "Portraits", Linda Sharrock seized the opportunity to express her beliefs, and laid them down as a dynamic piece of sound art. (EP)



Linda Sharrock

PATTI SMITH

"BIRDLAND"

FROM *HOLMES* (ANHRA CD) 1975

Verbal imagery can in a way of surrendering control up to a writer's literary strengths, and Patti Smith has always been central to Patti Smith life, and her masterpiece musical debut album gave the world outside New York's classic a taste of the soundworlds she was capable of evoking. "Birdland" — a nine minute epic only marginally shorter than the album's keynote track "Land" — started life as "The Harbor Song", a hallucinatory poem about battle, urban water. It reached its final shape under the guidance of producer John Cale. "Birdland" revels in its wide associations. Though inspired by Peter Reich's book *Of Doves*, the title reverberates with jazz references: the club presided over by Charlie Parker, albums by Miles Davis, Weather Report and a jazz standard lullaby. Even the refrain, "We Are birdland", came from a 1950s song by pianist Harry Smith. Anchored by Richard Sohl's piano riff, "Birdland" is a prime example of how, at the eye of a hurricane, Smith's focused voice holds her material together, even in the midst of the feedback storm that follows. (CD)



Patti Smith



KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN
"GERÄNG DER JUNGJUNGLE"

FROM ELEKTRONISCHE MUSIK 1952-1960

18 STOCKHAUSEN VERLAG GÖD 1986

Stockhausen's first masterpiece *Geräng Der Jungjungle* (Song Of The Jungle) results from his early interest in electronic instruments. It combines the additive techniques of musical synthesis, the rigorous systems of high ventilation and the sonic experimentation of the emerging forms of electronic soundmaking. Its influence is still felt in both the classical avant-garde and contemporary electronics. And yet focusing too strongly on Stockhausen's technological interests makes it easy to lose sight of another, equally revolutionary aspect of the piece. It represents a complete reconfiguration of the elements that we recognise as song. Working from a recording of a boy chorister singing extracts from chapter three of the Book of Daniel ("The Song Of The Youth In The Fiery Furnaces"), Stockhausen cuts the tape into a complex series of phrases, words and atomised phonemes and splices them with electronically generated tones. Like the greatest songs, music and word alike resonate with reciprocal power. Instead, the words actually become music and the music takes on the character of words. This is the core of the piece's surprising nature. The boy's voice emerges defiant from the surrounding coil of sound with a minuscule actus, confirming the title's declaration of it being a "song". But it also recasts the literary advances of Eliot, Joyce and Cummings as viable musical strategies while anticipating the Burmesean cut-up techniques of Kino, Bowes and others. With contemporary technology making such techniques so accessible, it is surprising that this potentially fruitful terrain for songwriters remains under-explored. (RM)

THE SOFT MACHINE

WE DID IT AGAIN

FROM VOLUME ONE & TWO (ACE CD) 1968

"The music of The Soft Machine includes shock values of unstructured composition although many of their works are songs," wrote Arnold Shaw in the *Encyclopedia* for the group's debut album. It was by Kevin Ayers, Sam Hickey and Jimi Hendrix's "We Did It Again" that paved exactly three minutes 40 seconds, but it feels like half an hour. Comprising only one line, "I did it again" (six three group members sing, justifying the "We" in the title) and a single riff - shadowing The Kinks' 1964 proto-Metallica hit "You Really Got Me" - "We Did It Again" totally rejects any kind of chorus/reprise structure. It does have a brief instrumental break, but legend has it that composer Ayers favoured the trio of himself, drummer/vocalist Robert Wyatt and organist Mike Ratledge singlemindedly repeating its core riff and line without deviation or variation. The result is a song as tronic-like as mantra. Canterbury might be a long way from Cologne, but Wyatt's motorik drumming here is not dissimilar to that of Jaki Liebezeit, of Can, who released their first album this same year. Having locked themselves into the rift, how do they get out of it? Wyatt's steady drumming, topped with Ratledge's psyche-lit riffs, finally speeds up into a gallop to absolutely nowhere. (jAHN)

ALEXANDER SPENCE

ALL COME TO MEET HER*

FROM OUR ISHNOADEZ CD 1980

All of our qualities as the unusual and idiosyncratic end product of a damaged psyche, written and performed in its entirety by Alexander 'Skele' Spence, late of Moxy Graze and New York's Believe Hospital, "All Come To Meet Her", however, stands out in relief amid the album's gentle chug. Sandwiched between the croaky lament of "Broken Heart" and the folk-blues twang of "Books Of Moses", it offers a brief glimpse of redemptive beauty. It's no-nonsense, fuzzy guitar and reverbed vocal form a blurred psychadelic daguerreotype, a semi-coherent echo of Spence's musical past. Lyrically it's pretty much the ghastly gangle line mania of his simplicity is made moving by the way it fleetingly achieves an awkward clarity while aiming for a state of grace. (Rf)

SUPER COLLIDER

RADIATIONS ON THE RISE*

FROM RWY DIGITAL RISE ROBOT RISE 2002

From deep in the troches via the tongue, teeth and lips, words processed via Jenice Listi's upper body are transmitted into impeccably high harmonics, fuelled at the instant of their birth, with liberally applied technical enhancements. Listi, singer in the duo Super_Collider, in which he's partnered by Techno producer Cristian Vogel, has yet to manage laying down an accurate facsimile of the breathtakingly daring, manic and soulful live performances he's been turning in over the past 12 months, but great things can be expected of his forthcoming solo chores on Warp. Alas, you can't paint entire tracks from nothing; sampling layers of voice in place of every instrument, from rhythm to noise, until in a few seconds there's a smothering bacing track sculpted right under your ears. The Super_Collider cerebral stream a crash dive through his luxuriant larynx, with its vastened whispers of Prince, Sly, Bryan Ferry dancing around his own uniquely perverse impercy. A wizard, a true star. (RT)

SWANS

TIME IS MONEY (BASTARD)*

FROM GREED/HOLY MONEY (YOUNG GOD CD) 1998

The dollar sign branding Swans' Greed/Holy Money coupling underscores Michael Gira's analysis of the economics of popular song. Its founding capital is the 12" single trailer, "Time Is Money (Bastard)", which equates the base exchange rate of money for bodies and time - hard labour, in other words - with pop's puppy love lycanth and the cash register's mechanical jingle. In "Time", Gira brings Des Replats to boiling point in the shimmering resentment of a Hubert Selby novel over a primitive but parsimoniously effective drum machine program. As with many of Swans' early songs, Gira brilliantly hones its language to greatest effect by word selection and delivery. Likewise, in a partly concealing partially acrobatic appeal to the capsized to empower themselves through the violation of those more powerful than themselves, Gira did not linger here long but the economy of his songwriting is still his strongest signature. (SR)

THE STOOGES

WE WILL FELL*

FROM THE STOOGES (ELEKTRA CD) 1969

Almost suicidally sequenced to follow "1969" and "I Wanna Be Your Dog" at the end of the vinyl album's first side, "We Will Fall" takes The Stooges on a lengthy odour through drone rock. At first it seems to be a straightforward, if somewhat aimless, continuation of existence in Ann Arbor as The Psychotic Sixers that threatens to unbalance the rest of their debut album. But the repetitive monotony of its cockpit repertory makes perfect sense in summing up their prosecco primitivism. This is the sound of players not exploding but contracting into an utterly catastrophic experience. John Cale contributes viola drones and a dry production which accentuates the music's compulsive beauty. For its ten minute duration, "We Will Fall" exists purely within its own limitations, shimmering with an authentic aura of bonged-out disaffection. Towards the end, as Iggy Pop mutters "goodbye", Cale bellows the sound with some mournful, melodic viola, lending it a serenity it probably doesn't deserve. (TR)

NED SUBLITTE, LAWRENCE WERNER & THE PERSUASIONS

EVER WEDDING CIRCLES OF REMORSE*

FROM SWIMS AT SEA, SAILORS AND SHOES

TRIPLE GARTH CD 1983

Frank Zappa's passion for doo-wop prompted him to sign The Persuasions to his Bizarre label in 1969. 30 years later that perversus a cappella group repeat his respect with a set of Zappa covers. In 1993 the group's burlesque voices and spellbinding harmonies were drawn into an even more unexpected and inspired alignment. Texan guitarist Ned Sublette studied composition with Kenneth Gaburo and has worked with the likes of Robert Ashley, Glenn Branca and Rhys Chatham. In 1982 he recorded the revisionist Country album *Weaken Classics*. For the past three decades, meanwhile, conceptual artist Lawrence Werner has displayed gnomic texts in galleries and public spaces. His previous musical collaborations had involved eminent feminist Poetres Yoko Ono and New York saxophone luminary Debbie Teng and Peter Gordon. On *Swims At Sea, Sailors And Shoes* his artful, witty lyrics are delivered in a mix of Sublette's downplay purring and The Persuasions' concatenating ringing street corner synapses. Some tracks have more adventurous structures and frosty instrumental arrangements, but on the purely vocal "Ever Wedding Circles Of Remorse", Werner's wily collaged text is cast like a cluster of pebbles into the reservoir of rock 'n' roll's prehistory, which proves to be still fizzing with musical life. (JC)

**DAVID SYLVIAN****"BRILLIANT TREES"**

FROM BRILLIANT TREES (VIRGIN CD) 1994

No other contemporary songwriter has been as naïvely honest in their introspection as Sylvian, who avowedly began his voyage of self-discovery as a Japanese frontman using the fretless bassmap of Brian Eno's *Another Green World* to get out of Japan. Far from covering his tracks, he brings onboard the very musicians through whose work he finds his bearings, namely Ryuichi Sakamoto, Holger Czukay and, most significantly on "Brilliant Trees", Jon Hassell, and elegantly incorporates their signatures in his own work. Most recently he has continued his quest for self with Denys Bailey and Chris Cutler, and while Hassell's minimalist monochord trummet playing is Sylvian's narrative motor, while the watercolorish mist central to the title-track's 1981 *Cream* Theory in Matsuya album drives the extended instrumental coda, as the lyrics trail off with "My whole life stretches in front of me/I'maching up like a flower/Unleashing my life back to the soil". In the *Fourth World* Ambient fantasy of "Brilliant Trees", Sylvian discovers his true voice. (BK)

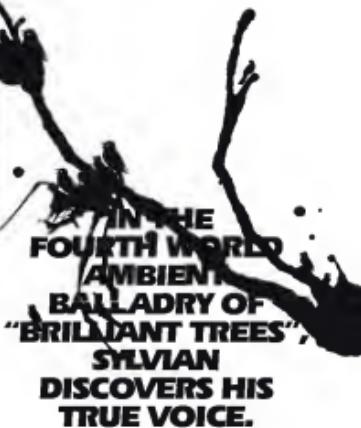
THIS HEAT**"HEALTH AND EFFICIENCY"**

(THESE CD) 1998

A "song about the sunshine", as the all too brief lyrics tell you at the outset. So, a song about the things that songs stand for, a narration of more or less apocalyptic concerns in a time after punk. The irony of the song, in the setting of a group (or Sun Ra Arkestra), "The universe is in this song...". But fuck, not the atmosphere, this is a compellingly lyrical grouping that, though it appears in *Abi*, is lost once more in the glow of its first appearance as a '12", when records were oceans and steels. But it fords nostalgia. Instead, here's a song that suggests a method of negotiating urban space through the sounds of that urban space delineated in a poem. In a lifetime performance by tape manipulator Gareth Williams, an incredible path hacked through the living, cityscape via the recorded sounds of the city. Its means and ends are one, as in total war. Hellics, surely, the visceral elixir of this music, its electrifying and monstrous nature. A staggering masterpiece, and an example of one of those rare audio occasions when everything briefly makes sense. Then it comes to an end, not with the comball cagnite the power profites after orgasm but with a sterner stranger's lip-plopping, wide-eyed wonder. (EB)

JULIE TIPPETTS**"DEBRIS COLLECTION"**FROM SHADOW PUPPETTEER
(LA COOKA RATCHA/VOICEPRINT) 1999

Mention of Julie Tippett is inevitably prefaced with reference to her gloriously soulful work as Julie Driscoll during the 1960s, notably her covers with Brian Auger of Bob Dylan's "This Wheel's On Fire" and David Ackles's "Rose To Cross". Fine as they are, though, it's her return to cover her late acoustic moments as an improvising soloist on *Shadow Puppeteer* that's a song cycle made from multi-tracked monophonism and composed pieces, recorded atoms over three years, generating in the process an implied storyline recounted in the sleeve notes. The music, evoked audibly out of her involvement with the group Ovary Lodge and studio with her husband, pianist Keith Tippett, is delicate, intricate and strange, finely detailed yet tapping deeply into the singer's physical energies. Tippett has cultivated her voice into multiple voicings, ranging from powerfully rhythmic chants to ethereal wisps. She personalises the terms of song form while drawing together strands of jazz, blues and contemporary music, overtone singing and membranous hocketts, plus many sounds of the natural world. Her chosen accompaniment involves wind chimes, recorders, thumb piano, mandolin, zither and small bells – tools for illigree work. She's a choir on "Debris Collection", circular sounds in her lower register shadowing the songing of a metal bowl, the song's title and other words reiterated in middle register, upper register ornamentation undulating in and out of effacing shininess. (JC)



Scott Walker



SCOTT WALKER

"BLANKET ROLL BLUES"

FROM CLIMATE OF HUNTER (VIRGIN CD) 1983

Claustrophobic Hunter is a prickly and dense album, with melodic and harmonic ideas that are far removed from the lushness of classic 1960s Scott. It's a real songwriting achievement but it's not hard to see why it sold so few copies. "Blanket Roll Blues" comes nearest to a conventional song but it's also one of this odd album's odder moments. It comes from the 1969 film *The Ragtime Kind*, which starred Marlon Brando as a musician and was scripted by Tennessee Williams, who also wrote this song. The song opens with a 90-second acoustic guitar introduction (played by an unusually restrained Marlon Brando), and then Walker's voice drifts over to enliven the track with his trademark metatheatrical blues. "When I crossed the river with a heavy load" (it) took nobody with me, not a soul." It might be a tale of escape to freedom over the Ohio River, part of the line between the slave-holding South and the North in antebellum America. The reassuring materiality of the blanket roll would suggest that this is such an earthbound adventure, but it doesn't feel like it. Neither body nor soul: the listener is left in doubt about whether Walker, like a whiteface Robert Johnson, is binding himself off to hell in a handcart. The song finishes abruptly, on a stark, openended chord that captures the lyric's precarious melancholia. Nice accompaniment, but if only he'd asked John Fahey... (RM)

MATTHEW 'MV' VALENTINE

"COOCOLA SAYS STARSTALIN"

FROM SPACE CHANTERS (PRINCE LP) 1992

Coocula is to Prince what Teletubbies is to the BBC. The Shock is to distract us from the teletubbies. Here, a three-chord bluesy blimpie, carabiner confidante and protagonist of his most Earth Elder, Daybreaks. Of Coocula & The Plunge Overtones (of Black Patti), through reminiscences like "Coocula's Moonlight Moan" and "Coocula In The Snow", Valentine's writings for Coocula's adventures work archetype American forms – blues, breakdances, railroad rhythms and honkytonk ditties – into off-colour tonal fancies as precise in their marriage of street codes and avant spritely as cultural frontmen like Sun Ra, Harry Partch, The Grateful Dead and Duke Ellington. "Coocula Says Starstalina" itself is one of his most ambitious imaginings, as a clutch of NYC's key underground operators, including Samara Lubelski and Tim Barnes, stretch the inherent elasticity of blues to the point of single chord shala while Valentine strings long lines of free associates verse into chorus-peaks that, in classic Beat form, are given structure according to the length of each breath. (DM)

KING TUBBY

"MORE WARNING"

FROM KING TUBBY'S SPECIAL 1972-1979 (TROJAN CD) 1989

In 1962, ABC Paramount released "Minions And Queen" by The Impressions, a US vocal trio led by Curtis Mayfield. The group had a string of major chart successes with the label during the 1960s. In Jamaica, where sound systems fought for supremacy at thunderous volume, and their weapons were the latest US soul and R&B releases, "Minions And Queen" was hugely popular. In typical Jamaican fashion the song was versioned many times, and perhaps the most famous of these, "Queen Of The Minions", was recorded by Garnett Campbell And The Elephants. Versioned yet again for producer Jimmy Lee, "Queen Of The Minions" became a bona fide hit for a second act and bouncy instrumental feature, Augustus Pablo's Minions. Only the bassline (now thronging the mix) and the changes were retained from the original. The sweet, slow groove of Mayfield's song was alone. An ominous hood section slides in now and again: anything is slightly discordant, everything out of whack. Pablo plays off-tinted scratches of melody that King Tubby runs ragged in the echo chamber. Guitar and organ make slashing, apocalyptic entries at irregular intervals. Breydel's walls come tumbling down, and the paroxysm of distortion that Tubby adds to the mix makes "More Warning" sound like an outcast from a lost civilisation. Whatever Curtis Mayfield had in mind, it surely wasn't this. (BMA)

JUNE TYSON WITH SUN RA & "BLACKMAN"

FROM UNIVERSE IN BLUE (EL SATURN LP) 1972

As a solo recording member of Sun Ra's ever evolving Arkestra, the late June Tyson was responsible for supplying dance moves and additional vocals to some of Ra's cosmotically inclined songs. But occasionally she was given the chance to show off her own vocal talents. As its title suggests, her "Blackman" is directed to the black men (and women) who live on Planet Earth, but the lyric also acts as a biblical warning that to ignore history is to willingly submit to oppression. "When the blackman ruled this land/Pharaoh was sitting on his throne," she howls over the stuttering swell of Ra's solitary electric organ. "I hope you understand," she continues, but few jazz critics and fans could get their heads around Ra's political interplanetary philosophy. Here, Tyson's emotionally cracked delivery takes on the perfectly poised pendulum rhythm of a Nefertiti looking towards the horizon and singing to a star filled sky from the perch of her humble shack in the middle of the Mississippi delta. On "Blackman", the sound of the cosmic blues is personified. (EP)

PATTY WATERS

"BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY TRUE LOVE'S HAIR"

FROM PRATTY WATERS SINGS (ABRAKADABRA DISK CD) 1998

As a child of the 40s, Patty Waters grew up listening to the voices of (among others) Nancy Wilson, Anita O'Day and Billie Holiday, but perhaps it's Holiday's wounded style that had the greatest influence on Waters's signature song. Originally a traditional 18th century English tune which travelled to the US via the Southern Appalachian Mountains, "Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair" is sung by the singer them a simple folk song to a complex avant-garde masterpiece where all her imagination, energy and emotion is unleashed over 13 earthshaking notes. In the words of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" confraternity, which she sang in the Southern US during the late 30s, Waters's version is walking, breathless lines of "Black Is The Color" astoundingly expresses the pain and anger of '60s America in the not too wake of President John F Kennedy's assassination. Part experimental protest and part love song (intended, perhaps, for the father of her son, black jazz drummer Clifford Jarvis), her extreme version of her chosen anthem also sent out a cry for humanity and sisterhood that echoes through the ages, touching all who hear it with an inexplicable sense of wonder. (DP)

HANS ZENDER

SCHUBERT'S WINTERREISE: A COMPOSED INTERPRETATION

(KAIROS CD) 1997/2000

With its themes of unrequited love, allegoric journeying, and death, Franz Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise* (1827) is the embodiment of rage. A 19th century German poet in the bruised bones of the 20th century, the cycle is enough to present a customary soliloquy – two men in headsets, a Steinway and a very large concert hall? composer/conductor Hans Zender asks, and in this powerful remake, he explodes Schubert's songfictions from the inside, putting the pieces back together with the intention of re-modelling this logic work for a contemporary audience. In Zender's version, the dissonant tension of Schubert's harmonies are enlarged upon and transformed into a kind of hysterical expressiveness, and the minimalism of the original piano accompaniment is exaggerated into disturbingly obsessive bass and abrupt outbursts heard across the entire orchestra. Whatever transformations Zender makes are superimposed back onto Schubert's original text, a technique that highlights the historic distance between 19th century Romanticism and the brutal realities of the 20th century. The suggestion that Zender has its roots in German Romanticism left many listeners uncomfortable at the premiere and Zender's winterreise remained controversial: the physical journey of Schubert's original hero now perceived as a journey across time and history. (PQ)

Contributors: Ed Easter, Clive Bell, Marcus Boon, Philip Clark, Julian Covello, Alan Cummings, Geeta Dayal, Matt Hynde, Louise Gray, Tony Hovington, David Keenan, Bibi Klop, Alan Lupton, Brian Marley, Marc Masters, Keith Melling, Will Montgomery, Brian Morton, Anne-Marie Neeson, Estelle Pouncey, Tom Ridge, David Stubbs and Rob Young

WRITING IN THE WIRE 103, 12 YEARS AGO, DAVID TOOP SPECULATED THAT THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON MUSIC HAD LEFT THE SONG FOR DEAD. PIECING TOGETHER THE EVIDENCE FROM THE DISEMBODIED VOICES OF PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEMS, THE WORK OF COSMOS'S SACHIKO M AND VOCALIST AMI YOSHIDA, AND THE POP GROUP ROOM 5, HE DECLARED HIS DEATH VERDICT ON SONG WAS PREMATURE



ANOTHER TIME

After two long days of hard physical work I started by drinking cold beer, then red wine, finally a couple of shots of Glenlivet. As a family, we are together, talked and laughed, then watched *Sex And The City*, but for me, this could only lead in one direction: Bobbie Womack.

There is a place, as Lennon, McCartney and Brian Wilson all documented through song, in which vulnerability and fortitude meet. Songs can be the embodiment of that place, perhaps metaphorically a physical space, but ultimately a site of emotion and imagination, identity and memory; this is a place where the torn parts unravel; simultaneously, the structure of the song unites them and this unmaking and remaking is a constantly repeated process that returns us both to the song and to the feeling.

This is a place that is not a place, but now there are places that are so not a place that they exist in spaces about which we know nothing. "Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities," writes Marc Augé in *No-Place: Introduction To An Anthropology Of Supermodernity*. "The first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten. But non-places are the real measure of our time."

Some years ago I met a sound engineer in Bern, Switzerland, who had recorded all the new announcements for the Swiss rail service. Each particle of voice was recorded separately in a digital format, he said, and then a complete sentence could be constructed by an operator to suit each occasion.

This felt like an extraordinary idea at the time, and caused some astonishment. Now we are only too familiar with these ascertained, alienated sounds that follow each other in disembodied sequences on trains and telephones. Sometimes, each particle seems to come from a different voice, as if a group of multiple personae speak in choreographed accord. In fact, each moment comes from a moment only loosely related to its neighbour. When we struggle to decipher the endearingly sound of tammy announcements on a station platform – "We apologise for the late running..." – we hear vernacular speech, spoken in an acoustically dead space, then dispersed and reshaped in its harmonic structure by the complex reverberations of vast semi-enclosed spaces or tunnels. When we hear digitised voices (mostly female) telling us the number we requested or the station we can expect, we are hearing word simulacra from a non-place, reassembled in dislocated time. The old method may be hard to understand, but the new one makes less sense.

Don DeLillo wrote about this in his short novel, *The Body Artist*, in which the unfamiliarity of the familiar – breadcrumbs, a face, reading the newspaper and eating at the same time – becomes so unbearably sharp that it floats away to a place where phantoms come to life: "She called Marcella and got the machine. A synthesised voice said, Please /leave //a message// at/her //the// tone. The words were not

spoken but generated and they were separated by brief but deep dimensions. She hung up and called back, just to hear the voice again. How strange the discontinuity. It seemed a quantum hop, one word to the next. She hung up and called back. One voice for each word. Seven different voices. Not seven different voices but one voice in seven different time cycles. But not male exactly either. And not words so much as syllables but not that either. She hung up and called back."

Behind the thrills and anxieties of digital culture, DeLillo finds words for the common experience of things being the same, yet dislocated in some elusive way that prods and disturbs memories of the atmosphere, no clearer than that of how things were, once upon a time or just last year.

12 years ago, ancient history or thereabouts, I wrote a piece for *The Wire* in which I proposed that songs barely survived the decomposing effects of technology. "They have been pulled into strings and gobs of interchangeable matter," I wrote, "descriptive systems whose authors have been relegated to peripheral usefulness (or entirely forgotten) in the transformative sequence of events. Songs survive, of course, because they can encapsulate big thoughts in small vessels, yet they are harder to write than ever and somehow, in their certainty and logic, less necessary than ever after all the years of disassembly."

But if that is true, and I still believe in some aspects of its truth, why am I sitting here on a Sunday night, drinking whisky and listening to Bobby Womack, Syreeta, Willie Hutch and all the other neglected songwriters from a time when songs were constructed around ideas and methods that are so much ancient history?

If I'm to be totally honest, my favourite record of last year was "Make Lux" by Room 5, featuring Oliver Cheetham. I'm not shy of saying this. Like Paul Morley, focusing obsessively on Kylie Minogue's "Can't Get You Out Of My Head" in his *Words And Music* book of last year, I can fight my corner, make connections to the erudite, brandish my love of cheesy disco with little concern for types who consider themselves too deep or angry for such froth.

And of course, Room 5's record fits any thesis exactly, since a 1983 disco anthem – "Get Down Saturday Night" – sung by a man whose vocal style is a throwback to the Bobby Womack/Willie Hutch style of the 1970s is then extracted from its original surroundings and chauffeur driven into the digital present. We accept this as normal, along with digitally disconnected messages, in the same way that people quickly accepted the schizophoniac idea that a woman could sing into a microphone in New York and then be heard in Chicago, thanks to the magic of the wireless. Oliver Cheetham, born in Detroit and now living in Surrey, can appear on *Top Of The Pops* with Room 5 (or the anonymous humans that represent the computer that is Room 5) to cement the emotional connection between audience, voice and technology.

of Sachiko's laser-like sinewaves and stethoscopic contact microphone. The intimacy of this duo is both intensely personal and startlingly detached, the listener a witness to self-surgery. The intended volume level is low, which confuses the difference between sounds that are more clearly either biological or electronic in close-up mode. Hearing the music, we seem to invade nose and throat; simultaneously feel invaded by digital and electronic sounds, and so feel pulled to a kind of close proximity listening, an uncomfortable fusion of sexual and medical.

The microphone is central to this, an amplification of the internal body, moving its organic processes closer to the alien world of the computer, blurring the sense of 'human nature' with binaural uterine that is not species specific. "Matter which has thus been given a voice – the radio, or telephone, for instance – still retains a fracture of the old supernatural explanations," writes Steven Connor, "and indeed begins to bring about a kind of re-enchantment of the world, in technological modernity, the dead and dumb world of matter begins to speak, though now not as the voice of nature or the breath of God, but on its own."

There is a certain romanticism in such projects, the imperative to create re-enchantment in the gaps and merges of human and digital, that takes us back to Dennis Hopper's early 90s cyber manifesto.

At the other extreme is the new Vocaloid singing synthesis technology, two audio software packages that offer backing vocals by Leon and Lola, virtual soul vocalists who can sing "any words or combinations of syllables you can imagine." Leon and Lola push us into the flailing arms of the dying William Gaddis, in his final novel, *Agape Agape*, gasping his last tobacco raddles breaths in a desperate huff through 50 years of collected, incoherent research on the mechanisation of music, mapped through the history of the player piano: "I've got the papers land surveys deeds and all of it right in this heap somewhere, get it cleared up and settled before everything collapses and it's all swallowed up by lawyers and taxes like everything else because that's what it's all about, that's what my work is about, the collapse of everything, of meaning, of language, of values, of art, disorder and dislocation wherever you look, entropy drowning everything in sight, entertainment and technology and every four year old with a computer, everybody has own artus where the whole thing came from, the binary system and the computer where technology came from in the first place, you see?"

So there are times, while we wait for songs that are remade to engage with this Gaddis vision of collapse, when the place where vulnerability and fortitude meet is a necessary reinforcement of the self, which is why there are times when I move inexorably toward the stories of Bobby Womack, Syreeta and Willie Hutch, which is another time and place. □ You can read David Toop's original article from issue 103, "AM Mix And No Master", on The Wire Website

We know this is not necessary, integral to the process, or truthful to our understanding of musical production, performance and spontaneity, but when the appropriate body delivers its own voice in real time, the rest of the music could be beamed down from planet Soda for all we care. I believe this is to do with the strange nature of the voice, and its complex relation to the body, a sense of self, and language.

Passages from Steven Connor's rich study of the disembodied voice, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History Of Ventriloquism*, help to illuminate this subject, particularly the way in which the voice articulates the body and its orientation in space. "So here is the essential paradox of the voice," Connor writes, "My voice defines me because it draws me into coincidence with myself, accomplishes me in a way which goes beyond mere belonging, association, or instrumental use. And yet my voice is also most essentially itself and my own in the ways in which it parts or passes from me. Nothing about me defines me so intimately as my voice, precisely because there is no other feature of my self whose nature it is thus to move from me to the world, and to move me into the world."

HipHop introduced the possibility of a dialogue between the quick and the dead. The Malian writer Amadou Hampaté Ba said that the death of an oral person is like a library burning down. Drawing from this historical continuum of oral culture, stored within the body and carried on a voice, HipHop also engaged simultaneously with the fragmenting nature of technology. As the music was cut, pasted, layered, scratched, looped and programmed, so the voice (poised between speech and song, poetry and street slang, story and clarity, fiction and experience) ran counter to dislocation through its embedding in narrative and the nature of the self. Place and non-place. In tracks such as Wu-Tang Clan's "Can It Be All So Simple", place (the sample voice, extracted from history) is only partially erased; non-place (the site at which sample voice and current voices meet) is never completed.

The need to hear stories is too powerful to resist. They offer secrets and revelation, a reshuffling of possibilities that has to have no limit. Most of us return, moth to flame, to the songs that merge with our values, our aesthetic, our desires, our memory. This is the configuration that brings vulnerability and fortitude together, yes songs that deny the decomposing effects of technology risk falling into nostalgia.

After years of giving up on songs, I find I want to hear voice and words negotiating melody again. At the same time, I want to hear voices negotiating the body (a body redefined by technology that denies the physicality of the body), converging with the digital world. A good example of this is *Cosmos*, the duo of Ami Yoshida and Sachiko M. Yoshida's microphones, microphonically oesophagial, aerophonic vocal sounds seemingly the forensic object

ANOTHER PLACE

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Xing Wu 15

Anupi Scherubing
Perry Lunde (Hannesa Mund)

Mutus Fideiss

String Quartet No 2 (Mvsi)

Metz Festival

All Piano (Soul)

Paul Hindemith

The Harmony Of The World (Wings)

Peter Tchaikovsky

Violin Concerto (BMM)

Charles Ives

Symphony No 1 (Chandos)

John Cage

Requiem (Wings)

Wolfgang Gaspar

Free Action (MPS)

Alejo Haibe

The Book (Supraphon)

Anthony Braxton & Derek Bailey

Royal Volume 1 (Ercord)

Phenomena

Dominique Cuper Hennemus

Alvin Lucier

Stefans Lovelyst Muus

Zhou Xun

Old Chinese Songs Vols 1 & 2 (Master)

Tycho

Rodrigo: Les Muses Arete Bi Denet (Decca)

Kroqzaan Kookj

The Lee (Tilted) Real Hyakuimminyuasatu (Horn)

Compiled by Tham Kar Mun and Yin Pen,
Xing Wu Records HQ, Klang, Selangor, Malaysia
www.xingwu.com

Easy Street 15

Mass

Dead Cities, Red Seas & Lost Ghouts (Ganesha)

cDUDDEAD

Ten Mouth/Big Dead!

Cannibalism

La Miseria De Men Rive (Touch & Go)

Deathtrap

Milkface (Kai Ravi Spain)

Punkskewd

Discofunk (N7)

Shallow Hunting

Concert Date (Sikan)

Festivals

Inner Tools

Matthew Diaz

Love Luck '96 Heaven (Ghostly/Spectral)

Various

Supermegacity 3 (Pefect)

Icos & Waze

Our Endless Numbered Days (Sita Papi)

Major

Smash! Make Good (Fit Cat)

Xia Xu

Fabulous Muscles (SRC)

Lars

They Were Wrong, See We Drowned (Matz)

Walking

Rock & Anves (Record Collection)

Blonde Redhead

Merry Is A Butterfly (MADI)

Compiled by Jim Johnson Petrey and Gary R Smith,
Easy Street Records, 20 Mercer Street, Seattle,
WA, USA, www.easystreetrecords.com

Sonidos 15

Walter Mazzalay

Per La Sama Del Osoche (Grieg)

Juan Hidalgo

Juan Hidalgo (Centro Atlantico De Arte Moderno)

Jesus Sanchez

The Bird, Or Is (Aja Margolin)

Platino, Voz Tra

Muneca Hechada (Xu Xu)

Zach Teller

Evangelio Musical State (Gasa)

Andrés Páez

Prólogo Ultimo De Perúlo (Por Cendal)

Carlos Santillán

Venezuela (RA, Taylor)

Wolf Vostell

De-Collage/Age Mask By Vostell (Julupla)

Taller De Música Madrileña

Concierto De Los Picos (Gobacaciones Accidental)

Vigilia Danzante Orgánica

Un Chiv Cháster (Wine)

Pedro Iglesias-Jaruz/El Corro/Represor

Rox Immortal (Hyde Art)

Zakir Sait

Sabu-Sergio Casas (Sabezon)

Potpolonia Princess Antología

Selección De Xavier Sabater (Sedecos)

Jesus Sanchez

Sonatas De La Luna

Idilico Volcancel Madridia

Motivos (Córdoba De Cisneón Experimental)

Compiled by Miguel Angel Ramón, Susanna,
Radio Autonoma, Madrid, Spain
www.radiouna.es

The Office Ambience

Some Youth

Some Name (Geffe)

Noisact

The Blue Room (Lund)

Bob & Roberta

Two Organ (Rene Peplow)

Basil Hurdin

Chemical Sketches/Chemical (Turk)

Arts Linkay

Bad Vibes (Steve Bob)

Pawerized

Venice Cloud

Deathprod

Deathprod (Steve Grammer)

Alexander Tucker

U Sound Vol 18 (U Sound Archiv)

Vanities

Honey (Weather Bleeding)

Scattered Head Of The Man

Ron Weid (Spin Of Dr)

Thomas Brinkmann

Take + (Matz)

Sierra Whiter-Britt

Boyz (Disposable Sound)

Thales Cesarsé

Ethereogen 17 (Bruda Metalic)

Matz (Matz/Mandy Macbeth)

Zoena Parcels

Wrightous Animals (Anettivore)

Staircase Soundsteps

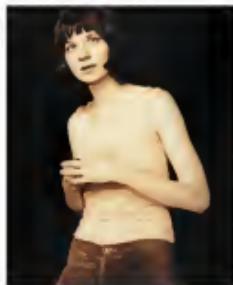
Yukonno (Strata)

Compiled by The Wine Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email: charts@thexfm.co.uk

For info on how to get featured, see page 26

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Buster Balett reviewed in Soundcheck

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Since information on artists, labels and distributors is now easily accessible through Internet search engines like Google, we have decided to discontinue the Directory. Contact details for many labels can also be found in the Links archive at www.thewire.co.uk.

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London Sinfonietta/Squarepusher/Jamie Lidell
Coventry, UK
Fuseleads#4
Leeds, UK
Other Minds
San Francisco, USA

Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and singles



Invisible hand pic: Christian Fennesz

FENNESZ

VENICE

TOUCH TOES CD

For those squeamish about syringes, there's a method of removing earwax which involves lying on one side and having a bamboo straw inserted in your ear, the end of which is lit, creating a vacuum which slowly sucks up the wax. At this leisurely and not uncleanly process unwinds, your eardrum is gently assailed by a series of tiny but intimate bubbling, hisses and crackles. This reminds in many ways of the music of Christian Fennesz, and there are those who regard his particular mode of guitar-based, glitch-baked "dystopian" as no more than a teasing and pricking of the senses, a music wholly lacking in 'depth' or implication. Although Fennesz does indeed operate at surface level, such a judgment is itself superficial.

The Austrian born Fennesz's reputation has grown substantially in recent years, assisted by the patronage of the likes of David Sylvian, who appears on this album (in return for Fennesz's contribution to last year's *Bleuhs* CD), and the critical response to 2001's *Endless Summer*, with its warmly abstract take on *The Beach Boys* (after all, the album shares its title with a Beach Boys companion). He's regressed by some as glitch's It Boy, the most likely to succeed in achieving some sort of breakthrough.

Certainly, there's at once a sense that *Venice* is weightier and more purposeful than its predecessor. If *Endless Summer* inclined towards the bucolic,

Venice is painted in darker, more pregnant hues, like clouds prematurely blackening the late afternoon skies. This is evident on the opening, "Rivers Of Sand", aptly descriptive of the subtler, less liquid shifts of Fennesz's sound. With its topography of scars and blemishes, it's typical of his work, turning on the occasional CD-skipping effect, akin here to a sudden, sharp gust of breeze snapping at plastic awning. Such disruptions keep the listener slightly off-centre; don't allow for reverie. Yet with its billowings, subsidences and Gothic recesses, it's quite magisterial, distinctly reminiscent of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia On A Theme By Thomas Tallis*, the sort of music that makes you want to rise to your feet. It's a reminder that Fennesz is impelled by a strong emotional undertow.

"Chateau Rouge" is initially a return to the pleasantries of *Endless Summer*, with its sparkling brooks of bubbling electronics, before a tsunami of interference builds and eventually overwhelms the track. "City Of Light", meanwhile, could be an extract from Gavin Bryars's *The Sinking Of The Titanic*, with its slow, disquieting, lulling motion. Here, it's as if the ship has long been abandoned.

"Crosses" features the assistance of improv guitarist Burhend Stangl. The effect is like a more subdued My Bloody Valentine, Kevin Shields and co porpoised through thick, distorted glass. Stangl also appears on "Laguna", the least "treated" track on the album and, significantly, the only track that doesn't quite work. The very 'essence' of Fennesz is that he

The bucolic *Endless Summer* finally over, the Viennese glitch virtuoso returns to the shadows for *Venice*. By David Stubbs

obscures the six-string origins of many of his sounds beyond recognition.

Much more effective is "Transit", featuring the vocal contribution from Sylvian, whose lync, an elegiac rumination on the theme of Europe, is way, way more effective than his faintly embarrassing upcoming collaboration with Ryuichi Sakamoto. As the lync winds down to some sort of oblivion – "Lights are dimming/the lounge is dark/the best cigarette is saved for last" – Fennesz weaves a spare soundtrack of radioactive toxins and malfunctioning striplights as if to suggest that the national grid is on the point of scuttling out altogether.

This, coupled with the enchantingly beautiful "The Point Of It All", is a reminder that there is a great deal more to Fennesz than so many yards of synthetic material. His musical language, though often suggestive of nature, is made up of wholly unnatural elements – distortions, errors, interference, jumps, disconnections, burnt out fuses, pops and podunkers. Yet it is endlessly rekindling itself, refusing, finally, to die away all together. That's the truth, the beauty, the humanity and the perturbability of it. Finally, the magnificently titled "The Stone Of Impermanence", with its hallstatt of static and serial cross-cuts of frazzled vapour trails, is a reminder that, like Enzo, Fennesz has a rare quality in an increasingly commonplace genre. It's that of poring exactness, of getting beyond the mere mechanics and loops of the electronic process. *Venice* is more than mere fiddling. It burns. □

AGF LANGUAGE IS THE MOST QUEEREST 6 CD BY MATT PYTHIE

At the Am Electronica Festival in Linz, digital artists combine with theorists of virtual reality in a yearly attempt to institute tomorrow's aesthetics. The symbolic centre of the festival is a live open air performance in the Klanggarten. However, despite a vibrant fringe music scene, the high profile of the occasion regularly generates the need for a sound and light spectacular of operatic proportions. This, ironically, can cause the music to recede from the cutting edge. Such has been the case in part with AGF, also Berlin-based Atome Grete, a laptop artist who combines an interest in digital processing with linguistic explorations. The theme for the 2003 festival was 'code', and Language Is The Most circulates spoken fragments on this theme – 'docs... documented documents... systematic statement of a body...' – which may well be readers excepts from a dictionary definition of 'code'. However, from the opening moments in 'What a warm, sooty, pale pulse converges with a static tonal wash over the rhythmic nudges of a synthetic chord', we're in somewhat familiar Ambient terrain.

Within these parameters, AGF plays expertly with textures and densities. Forms morph volitionally and give way to micro-triggers and trokades of sound. 'Delusion' is more uneventful, with its sample of human sobbing, and 'Arriving' interbreeds sea, strata, percussive environments and electronic clutter. Hyperreal soundscapes brood and split. Ultimately, however, AGF hasn't broken free, as she had hoped, from the 'pressure to have to say something understandable'. The low end densities must have flooded out, sublimely from the towers of speakers in the Klanggarten's 160,000 Watt tent space, and Grete's hurried narration – 'I see evolution occurring on every level of existence in a total flow running' – affirms the general feel of holistic optimism.

PEKKA AIRAKSINEN MADAM I'M ADAM NBB RESEARCH DIGEST LK642 ZC02 BY JIM HAYNES

Stewart Staples once claimed that he fabricated some of the names that appear on the now famous NBBW West End list of influences published in conjunction with the debut NBBW record *Charles Meeting On A*

Dissecting Table... In 1979, Phillips Staples' remakes were an attempt to assuage fans and collectors who were puzzled by the incredible obscurity of many of those artists. It turns out, however, that his claim is a double bluff, and every station on the NBBW list is valid. Pekka Airaksinen is namechecked on that list – his recordings have remained elusive outside of his native Finland, even though he has been quite active within his homeland's avant-garde community since the late 1980s.

Listening to Madam I'm Adam, a collection of Airaksinen's wittily eclectic scenes of genre-bending work, it's clear why Staples looked so fondly upon him. The first of this two disc set is selected from Airaksinen's historical recordings. In the late 60s, he was a member of the Spasm, infamous for their sexually explicit performances and confrontational stances against the status quo. The sleeve notes describe The Spasm as having 'elements of "Krautrock's most rock monologue... screaming guitars, free jazz saxophones, perrenial hazy hoodman howlout passages and revolutionary slogan... Sounds pretty great – however the Spasm's commitment to Madam I'm Adam do not match that description. Rather, they present muddled productions of growing low end guitar feedback closer to the sensibility of The Dead Zon Anno 2000 II.'

Since then, Airaksinen's passion has been electronics, revolving around a peculiar fusion of mechanical rhythms with the gestural expressivity of free jazz. Early experiments such as 'Molbydrum', recorded under the moniker Gandhi-Fruit in 1975, offer seductive, stakeholdering perceptions of simple electronic tones swaddled in aqueous huang. In the early 80s, he arrived at his most coherent vision with the Buddhas Of Golden Light album, in which plucky 808 rhythms slink through boppy pulses, topped with domestic synth stabs and malleable electric aquatics. The three featured cuts from that album recall the ostentatious boutiques of Fine Jimi Tenor as well as Dick Hyman's bubbly 1960s Moops exercises.

Airaksinen's recent works, such as the impressive Techno mutation 'Epistemological Word Error' (2001), cascade with delirious drum programming, well suited to his keyboard improvisations. The second disc is a collection of commissioned remixes, with a tracklisting that mirrors the selections of the first. NBB Research label boss Antti Nakkila timestamps Airaksinen's early 80s sound into a gritted abstraction of cacophonous plastic rustlings. Staples Staples displays his immense talents in

among one of Airaksinen's recent stashes in algorithmic loops, rendering it as a monolith of droning tones and atom bomb busts. Another highlight is Simon Whitehead-Smith's remix, which blurs the broken rhythms of Airaksinen's original into a windup driving狂怒。

Madam I'm Adam does not pretend to be a comprehensive overview or even a fluid listening experience. In focusing upon disparate ideas and variable trajectories, the compilation, as well as the remixes, reflects the eccentric and progressive approaches that Airaksinen has adopted throughout his career.

THE ALUMINUM GROUP MOREHAPPINESS WISHING TREE WTR020 CD BY KEN HOLLINGS

Approaching the middle part of The Aluminum Group's projected trilogy on the state of the American soul, which began with Happiness, is a little like coming upon the remnants of some exclusive gated community. Things are put on show for security purposes as much as for entertainment display. The pursuit of happiness is from promise to exceed US citizen as an inseparable right by their nation's founding constitution, which might explain the slightly wrist and damaged quality of these songs. Written and sung by Chicagoan brothers John and Frank Niven, Morehappiness has a buttressed numbness at its heart, a sense that despair and decay are both processes happening elsewhere and to somebody else. Check out the knowing knowinglessness of 'Truth Is Wanted On Nothing' or the innocent action with which guest vocalist Cynthia Plastercaster describes how a bird sets a butterfly and 'both flew right away' on opener 'Water Butterfly'.

'Snowfall' features images of a female convict being held down and tied by force, set against the banal observation that 'everything gathers in the filter of your pain'. Running like a line of defence throughout the entire collection, the craft with which each composition has been presented. Assisted in large part by Torstein John McEntire, the Niven Brothers use electronic keyboards, simple drums and a light dusting of guitars to give shape to the nostalgic longings and mela apprehensions that inform Morehappiness. The retooled harmonies gently assured vocal deliveries and polished lyrics all suggest, as does the modest running time of this release, that the world may be going to hell in a handcart but there are still some artists out there

who can remember how to make a decent album just like they used to before all these Pds, MP3s and 99 cent downloads came along. And there are times when that's not such a bad thing.

AMM AT THE ROUNDHOUSE ANOMALOUS ICE801 CD BY ROB YOUNG

The compilation Not Necessarily 'English Music', put together a couple of years ago by David Toop, opened up a brilliant window into a neglected garden of 70s浩 music in Britain. Cornelius Cardew and various Improv players are becoming better documented from this period, but who now knows how groups such as Naked Software, Gérard Rire and Intermodulation sounded? Tapes, if any, languish in archives, private collections, or were consigned to the dustbin long ago in despair at their every finding, a willing audience, as were life choices and priorities surely killed in.

The International Carnival of Experimental Sound, which occurred at London's Roundhouse in August 1972, was a précis of this time. It was intended by its promoter, the ideologic American Herbie Waterson, to convene anti-establishment musicians, performance artists, film makers and dancers under the themes 'Myth, Magic, Madness and Mystery'. John Cage participated, and AMM were one of around 300 bold artists including David Baxford & Lal Coddin, soloist Charlotte Moorman, composers David Rovinsky, Michael Wiesner, John White and Christopher Hobbs. Sweden's Fylkingen collective, Porsmose Sinfonia, Sportsatusseus Music Ensemble, and The Ta Mahal Travellers,

At the Roundhouse you can hear a very different AMM than the one that is still active today. The unit was in an intermediate phase after Cardew had left, leaving just drummer Eddie Pollock and saxophonist Lou Gane. A few years later, when guitarist Keith Rowe came back to the fold, Gane moved out – the duo format has been too liberating. He relocated to Exeter, although he continued to play with Priory (they even performed at the Vortex in 2002). But they were more closely allied to free jazz book here, and the 'I' word is not one you could ever comfortably use to describe the group today.

Gane was and remains a solid, equal player – there's something of the Prestige-era Sonny Rollins in his tone at times, but he remains fleet of foot and never looks into anything like a key during 45 minutes of music. The interplay is

Rolf & Fonky
dream tracks plaster cast mini-cd
with remixes by Stewart Walker and Marco Passarani

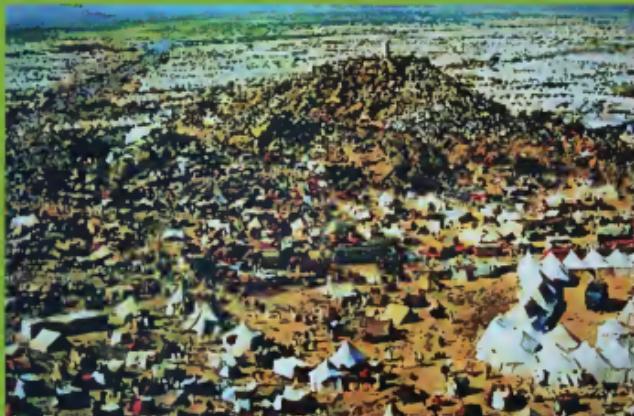
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 Andy Viz-first aid course-12" ep vinyl
PERSISTENCE RECORDS



Postcard from Palestine: detail from the artwork for *Audio Palestine*

RADIO MOROCCO

SUBTLE FREQUENCIES SF007 CD

I REMEMBER SYRIA

SUBTLE FREQUENCIES SF008 CD

RADIO PALESTINE: SOUNDS OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

SUBTLE FREQUENCIES SF006 CD

Some years ago, writing in an edition of the now apparently defunct magazine *Halena*, Sun City Girls' Rick Bishop descended with close attention to detail his travels in India, and provided one very trenchant piece of advice. For your first meal in India, he said, go straight to the first, dirtiest looking restaurant you can find, and gorge yourself on their infested wares. For 48 hours you'll be sick as a dog, but you're bound to get a stomach bug some time, so you might just as well induce it as quickly as possible. Bishop was eager to get on with the reasons for his stay, deep and involved research into the arcane byways of subcontinental trance ritual, which he would delve into in local libraries before plunging into the interior to seek out the kind of trance and bloodletting Kali worship described so vividly to Erik Davis in *The Wire* 24.1.

Sun City Girls' Sublime Frequencies label has been inaugurated precisely to air the kind of audio research they have been conducting in what they still refer to as the Third World. All take the form of audio mosaics culled from local TV and radio broadcasts, street recordings, occasional chance encounters and so on. All are beautifully packaged, in a glossy saturated colour collage of postcards, flyers and poster art that perfectly mirrors the recordings in spirit. For these sounds likewise have the colour balance mixed out.

The three releases here are credited to individual collators. Radio Morocco and Radio Palestine are collages of cassette recordings off the radio which SGD's Alan Bishop made as a youthful traveller at the early '90s. Mark Gergis, a member of San Francisco experimental group Mono Pause, made the audio travelogue *I Remember Syria* between 1998-2000 (an unlikely prospect, post-2001). Here the sound

displacement becomes almost quadraphonic – doors slam behind you, street vendors and passers-by yell over your shoulder, doors silent and unserviced vehicles belch past on all sides. Listening on headphones is a very creepy experience – I kept jumping and checking that a car hadn't just crashed through the outer wall of my house.

Aspects of life in these locations that are guarded, or unreported in Western media are opened up via these sound portals. In among the bursts of pop and traditional music sourced from the radio on *I Remember Syria*, locate go on the record about stuff even Al-Jazeera will rarely reveal: a married gay man in Aleppo talks frankly about the necessarily secret Syrian homosexual scene, a Damascus host sits wily about how he's invited Clinton, Chirac and the Queen round to dinner. Another braggart expresses open hostility to "the white man" who loudly professes to be "the best, the leader of the free world", etc. It's also a mosaic of noises whose cumulative effect is to pinpoint very particular sonic details about the place in question. One track is made up of sleeping mobile phone tones, one of which sounds a little like a sas.

A slight discomfort accompanies this relentless aural voyeurism. Certain conventions dictate confessions of sound like this from foreign lands. Musicians and voices are not given names; they become ciphers, their souls snatched, forgotten. It is like watching someone's holiday video tapes and wondering about all the lives of the strangers who wander in the background. And while it might be argued these projects attempt to get under the skin of societies that seem closed to Westerners outside of a touristic context, or which are reported on in very stratified ways, most of the voices heard across all the Sublime Frequencies discs are male.

What separates these recordings from those on, say, *Oromo, Topic or Playsound?* is that I think the very fact that they are not merely recorded straight out in a field, in real time – set up (you suspect), prearranged, documented and tagged. Instead we are presented with a re-edited mosaic of noises, voices, snatches of Saharan pop music, jazz and orchestras, and even

Rob Young is entranced by Sun City Girls' sonic mosaics from the Middle East – three new exhibits from the secret museum of mankind

have European news broadcasts bounced back at us. There is also a musicality about some of these snatched fragments that a more forensically minded release might eat out. Occasionally, poor reception flags the broadcast with a fluttering tremolo which acts as a mood effect on the piece of music being broadcast. Gergis and Bishop clearly appreciate this as a piece of random music of chance in its own right.

We've all heard a shortwave radio sweep, but there's something about the way Alan Bishop does it on *Radio Morocco* and *Radio Palestine* that seems to brush the different stations out of the ether like cobwebs containing all manner of luscious prey. "Tangential Psychedelic", on *Palestine*, is practically an electronic collage of tiny radiophonic notes, combined like a piece of musique concrète such as Hymnen, that makes the pieces more like a transformed objet trouvé than a documentary.

Ever since the wanderings of Herodotus, via literary voyagers such as Sir John Mandeville, Marco Polo and the medieval Muslim explorer Abu Abdulla ibn Battuta, chronicles of travel have afforded opportunities for part-tourists whose creative wellsprings lie in bogglement and disorientation – a kind of cultural jelling which takes far longer to settle down than the common veneer that disrupts sleep patterns. Like the folk archivist Harry Smith, the Bishops make considerable efforts to patch all this collected stuff together like a quilt, to make sense of the accumulated traces of human art and activity and make links with a rural past, that, so they have discovered, still exists in secret places. This enables these records to be heard for more than their inherent "weirdness". As the positive effects of globalisation become apparent – protest and solidarity enabled and mobilised on a planet-wide scale – nations will be called on to accept "otherness" on the other side of the world, just as minority and multicultural interests are accepted at home, wherever home may be. Meanwhile, Sublime Frequencies holds out a very other Other than the Others we have previously known. □

superb, as you'd expect. Privalov thrashes wider and for longer than he tends to these days, though his tattoos and magnificently controlled rolls, which can suggest a male obsessive, carefully pouring mung beans into a biscuits tin, are insubile as a signature over 30-and-a-half years ago. The performance has been retrospectively titled "The Sound Of Indifference," a reference to the audience's apparent lack of interest — spatterings of tentative applause, cheering doses and the occasional cough pepper the set. The remarkable thing about Mud is that their concentrated soundfield neutralizes such intrusions, absorbing them into the business at hand. A remarkably clear record of the most dedicated Improv group in their element.

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE

SUNG TONGS
FAT CAT FATP08 CD

BY ROB YOUNG

After the mint-fresh shock to the system provided by last year's proper debut by Fat Cat of Animal Collective's earlier two LPs, *Dense Melanote* and *Spoon They're Gone, Spent They're Vanished*, these new studio recordings by the Brooklyn outfit come as something of a disappointment. It's recorded by the duo currently touring as Animal Collective — Ayer/Tem and Panda Bear — so perhaps it needs the entire triumvirate to press all the right buttons. Although the two can work a mean seam of improvised frenzy/melodic chime dues live, the refined acoustic guitar structures that permeate the majority of Sung Tongs end up repeating themselves like so many weird and slightly strained campfire songs.

It just feels a little too pat, guitar for the new weird US crowd, just enough feebly compressed digital noise running sultry in the background, and some sustained vocal embellishments that play with the physicality of the mix itself. But when they move beyond the guitars' abstractions and toss a few lyrics into the chowder, they appear to have regressed to a childhood *Peter Pan* zone, with the whimsy of "Who Could Win A Rabbit?" and "Kids On Holiday"; "We Tigers" sounds like the team song of an Ivy League football squad.

The best stuff views the world through the sun-kissed psychedelic lens of Baillot's unpsychotropic *Do Mutantes*; the lesser material just sounds like Ben Wilson: "You don't have to go to college" they sing in *Pet Sounds* harmonies on "College"; string 54 seconds of complex arrangement to state the bleeding obvious.

ESZTER BALINT

MUD
BARTONONE 162 CD

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

Immediately, the woman's voice seems a good match for the banjo picker — either one could be described as iconic, both operating at a drowsy trimp and appearing unconcerned with strict timekeeping. Both sound American and rustic, though soon enough it becomes clear that this is not the case. Eszter Balint pronounces the title of "Pebbles & Stones" with a glibby Hungarian inflection; the banjo soon collides with a slide guitar that could be quoting from the opening motif from *Capt Beaufort's The Spotter's Kit*. And so the paradigm is formed, just a few bars into Balint's second solo effort,

Mud. This is the avant blues of a European expatriate woman living in New York but, as Hilton Als remarks of Nico before her, "outside the comfort zone".

Much can be made of Balint's exotic curcumian visage, as both film actor (*Stranger Than Paradise*) and music supervisor, or as the child of perpetually thespians (her parents founded America's legendary Squat Theatres, where Sun Ra's Arkestra played down the block from the Chelsea Hotel and where Nico sang her final set in New York). At core, however, it's the mystery of energy of urban life that informs most of *Mud*, even the samba rhythms of "No One". This is the world-wary viewpoint of a woman possessed of many equivalencies, a wistful temperament and no fixed address.

For those intrigued by Jurgenson analysis or symbolist poetry, there is much to chew on within *Mud*. A great moth menaces the singer; in the middle of the night, they fly "all around the room". Wild geese are equated with personal direction and "an old fat crow" imparts lessons about love and loss. Much of Balint's lyrical agenda might reside happily within the pages of a Jim Thompson novel, tales of gritters marooned in cheap motels at the edge of town. She sings of dead husbands with sad eyes, made jobs, honest whines and "long a leg'd dog". Her concerts are equally true throughout, and could as easily be the musings of either a runaway teenager or the ghost of a dead madame, albeit one who died Laughtonian's *Melodica*.

Balint's voice is not an instrument of great range, and often sounds like the two-note solo of Welschmensch. All the same, she addresses the proprietary needs of each take, her singing often assisted with appropriate signal processing formulated by producer JD Foster. Her accompanists are, for the most part, great *Yef* players, as is Balint herself, who contributes, among many instruments, guitar, violin, glockenspiel and keyboards.

Together, in the larger measure that achieve a loud, rooky, shambling ambience without resorting to any of the prevailing clichés of faux-Americania, the cadences of *es ma* reflect Balint's delivery on "Good Luck", as counterpart to her defining chorus: "We heard about eternity in a sang/ I know it doesn't last that long."

BATEAU LAVOIR +

ARCHIE SHEPP

BATEAU LAVOIR +

ARCHIE SHEPP LIVE

BATEAU LAVOIR BLOST CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Belgian ambient/noise/improv artists Bateau Lavoir combine spontaneous musical performances with improvised video. With debts to psychedelia and performance art, the remit now takes a surprising turn with the involvement of free jazzor Archie Shepp. The Subteau Website describes him, rather misleadingly, as a free Improvisor, but his 100s any clef in jazz.

Originally formed in 1990, the group are totally committed to the ideology of unprepared improvisation. Guitars Gles Thomas comment that "our objective is to be continually active in that moment of dynamic equilibrium where time is present. There is a strong history for this in music but in film with its famous inheritance of literature and theatre the history is not so clear..." With Markus Hoenen on video, Bateau

Lavoir are anxious to subvert this paradigm.

There's a rawness to this 2002 live recording, where tracks end abruptly Archie Shepp plays soprano and tenor sax and sings in his deep baritone. This is a new departure for the 66 year old jazzie — despite his own theatrical background, he's not known as someone who's pushed the boundaries of free jazz into other genres and media. Actually it's impossible for him to eschew his jazz pedigree and how he even sings a blues. There's an unsettling incongruity between the warmth of Shepp's tenor and the rather cold, machine driven strategies of Bataou Lavoir — even the grooves are brittle. But although the results don't always convince, Shepp certainly answers the critics who complain about his return to tradition.

THE BLITHE SONS

ARM OF THE STARFISH
FAMILY VINEYARD 99 CD

BY KATHY KINOLINE

Loren Chesse and Glenn Oroszak are prolific members of the San Francisco based Jewelled Antler Collective, purveyors of meandering, freeform acoustic atmospheres. As one half of the quartet Thuya, they produced one of 2003's most beautiful records in *All Strange Beasts Of The Past*, and this release mirrors a similar vein of tamed out delocation. Oroszak is behind the more conventionally musical aspects of their work, his slinky, rambling vocal murmur and slowly unfolding guitar patterns shifting in and out of focus over the album's five tracks. Chesse has shown on records like his marvelous collaboration with Jim Hayes as Coelacanth what a master craftsman of abstract sound he is.

The duo have chosen either more extreme outdoor environments than on previous releases within which to record their winding modal implications. At times, the murkiness of the nearby ocean is the dominant feature of the music. At others, the reverberation of acoustic space operates almost as much as an instrument in itself, so tangible is its bounding viscosity. The way they exploit the same characteristics of the surrounding space by amplifying their exotic collection of stringed instruments just to the point of feedback is simply stunning.

The Blithe Sons impress most on freedom passages like the opening track "Sparkling Details" and "Trem" (recorded with fellow Antler alumnus Greg Brashier). Here they demonstrate their extraordinary ability to sense the air around them, to bring ambient space to life. Each piece becomes a profound dialogue with its environment, as the space seems almost to speak back to them. Arm Of The Starfish is yet another magical piece of work from one of the most consistently interesting musical collectives at work today.

BURN/COXHILL/EDWARDS/
MINTON/RUSSELL
MOPOMOSO SOLOS 2002
MANHATTAN 4109 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

The monthly Nappingomos series of concerts — the title meaning "Medisman, postmodernism, se what?" — were begun in London in the mid-1980s by guitarist John Russell and pianist Chris Burn. On 21 November 2002, the occasion documented by his fine Einstein disc, the format was five solos: from Burn, Russell, bassist

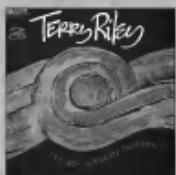
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Looping live loop: Steve Lacy

<TRIO X 3>

NEW JAZZ MEETING BADEN-BADEN 2002
HATOLOGY 9407 2XCD

When he discovered the work of turntablist Philip Jeck, composer Bernhard Lang was inspired to attempt to transcribe vinyl loops in the piece *Differenz/Wiederholung 2* (DW2) for flute, cello and piano. The effort turned into a cycle of pieces, as the composer explained: "My vision was of an abstract turntable, instrumentalising its processing possibilities and virtualising them. The last result was the piece DW13, where I try to see the whole orchestra as one gigantic turntable; I also went so far to connect the speed and pitch parameters using proportions, simulating this fixed relation in turntables." Lang belongs to the generation of post-Lichtenmann German composers that includes Georg-Friedrich Haas, Wolfgang Rihm, Best Turrer and Mark Poloschek. *Differenz/Wiederholung 2* appeared in 2003 on their Karosse house label. But though in some ways DW shines a high modernist soundworld, it turns out to have much broader implications.

DW2 was later revised for flute, tenor sax and piano and forms the basis for this very ambitious attempt at an elusive dialogue between jazz, contemporary composition and electronic music. The three trios in question involve three players from each tradition. The project was sponsored by South West German Radio (SWR), through its longstanding New Jazz meeting in Baden-Baden – the benign patronage of German radio, crucial to post-war modernism, still endures. Reinhard Kager's sleepwalks put a heavy Teutonic gloss on the attempt. The musicians were to "resolve, or sublate [aufheben] their respective shortcomings in the best Hegelian sense of the term", allowing artificial boundaries to collapse. But whatever your take on sublation, the serious terms of the description are fully justified by the results. This

is a unique effort of synthesis in Hegel's or any other sense.

"Discovering the loop as a means of deconstruction is a crucial step in the development of loop aesthetics," Lang has explained, referencing the work of William Burroughs and Brian Eno. Stockhausen's use of a feedback loop in *Studie 2* and its rediscovery as *Frippertronics* by Fripp & Eno. However, as a performer Lang was familiar with the structures of free improvisation, which in most cases were indebted to a linear mode of narration. "At a certain point I found this very boring," he added, and so with groups like The Vienna Loop Orchestra, Triocorder and Laletoo he tried to base improvisations on loops, both provided by a sampler and by live musicians.

The concept has evolved further in *New Jazz Meeting*, for which Lang prepared 44 samples of DW2 for the various musicians. The classical players are Basian pianist Paul Alvaro, flautist Philippe Racine and saxist Marcus Weiss from Switzerland, though we're not told whether they were also on the sampled performance. The three electronic musicians are Lang himself, Christof Kurzmann from Berlin, who's worked with the likes of Werner Dafeldecker, Burkhard Stangl and Taku Sugimoto and turntable artist Philip Jeck from Liverpool. The jazzers are Steve Lacy, New York bassist Peter Herbert, and Viennese drummer Wolfgang Reisinger. Duplates with short loops were specially pressed for Jeck to manipulate on his lo-fi customised turntables.

Lang's piece in its original form is presented here in four parts. In a compelling double tribute, the composer uses acoustic instruments to mimic in real time the turntablist's and sampler's spasmodic stuttering. The soundworld of contemporary composition is colonised by processes and gestures from dance culture – not as surface gloss but at the true level of form. In contrast with minimalist process

Andy Hamilton marvels at a new synthesis of jazz, modern composition and electronica involving Bernhard Lang, Philip Jeck and Steve Lacy

repetition, the result is manifested in a contagious nervous energy, purest in "DW 1.2.1" which opens the first disc. That disc features a selection of live recordings from the German tour, while the second comprises the best studio takes. At each concert, the jazz trio played with each of the three electronic musicians in turn. All nine musicians performed together once, and each evening DW 1.2.2 was performed in the original version, divided into four parts, showing the difference between the manipulations and improvisations and their template. The source material is conceptually clear enough for it to inform and be recognisable in the work of the remixers and improvisors.

The studio mixes on the second disc are on the whole cooler. "Remix 11.1", featuring Lang and Kurzmann, is subdued, with Reisinger on drums providing a son continuo. The same personnel reappear on the darker, denser "11.4". On "7.7", by the Jeck/Lacy duo, Jeck creates heavy breathing and a galumphing rhythm against unusually fierce multiphonics from the soprano saxophonist. "8.3" which follows is more fragmented in mood but again with breathy sounds from Jeck and Marcus Weiss, while Alvaro on piano tussles with his treated sound image as it ricochets from side to side of the soundstage. Although "Remix Karterupe 3.2" with Jeck, Herbert and Reisinger isn't at the sonic impasto end of turntablism, Jeck creates industrial textures of coloured noise in a haunting evocation that moves away from Lang's original concept. Christof Kurzmann's solo "Remix Tübingen 1.3" begins with a rapid ticking that drifts into the centre of your skull when listening on headphones, but filters out turntablist elements for long stretches of continuous tones. The full Nonet performs only once on these sides – on the rambunctious "Karlruhe 3.11". Overall, a remarkable project. □

John Edwards, vocalist Phil Minton and soprano saxophonist Lol Coxhill, followed by a quartet improvisation. All soloists are on good form, but most compelling are the explosive "Woodcuts" by Edwards, and the insanely titled "Speechless" by Lol Coxhill. Edwards is a free improviser through and through, in contrast to the more evident jazz rooted bassist Paul Rogers, who, surprisingly this is one of the first completely solo performances he's recorded.

Lol Coxhill is the Queen Mother of free Improv, much loved and respected, even though I assume she doesn't bank at Coutts, but the depth of his achievement has yet to be fully recognized. On his solo, his eloquence is down from years of improving experience, and from who knows what dark recesses of the imagination. The tone is irresistibly strong, placing at times without being shell, the lines are incisive, and there's a greater variety of effects – turkey gobbling, pianissimo, duck ones and tender moments. Barn's "Traps" draws in part on some of the effects heard on his previous, fine interpretations of the music of Henry Cowell. The title of the central track, "Quintet 'Til The End Of Time", generates to Oliver Messiaen, and maybe also refers to the way the group have had to batten through the radical jazz time out of which most of their improvising evolved. Morton's bulimic impressions are again prominent. A great disc, among the best of some excellent recent Ensembles recordings.

URI CAINE/GUSTAV MAHLER

DARK FLAME

WINTER & WINTER 94/95 CD

BY BRIAN MORTON

According to Hans Werner Henze, the symphonies and songs of Gustav Mahler introduced the world to the new sound of music interrogating itself about the reasons for its own existence and nature. "It is a knowing music, with the same tragic consciousness as Freud, Kafka, Mussé," he remarked and implicitly added to the list Mahler himself, the three-edged Bohemian in Austria, Austria in Germany, and Jew in the world.

Nothing could be more than Uri Caine's now longhandwritten interpretation of Mahler as a source of jazz themes, except that second time round the tragic strain is thrown as a kind of subtle sonic fate. The *Kinderchorlieder* are now "Ice Coat Lieder Leader"; Julie Paton's wry narration to *Das Reme* itself drives on the Mahler songs and turns one of the melodies into a hedged cabaret whirr. More successful is Steinlen/Hans Werner Henze's German reiteration over "Die Blaue Eyes", though she sounds disconcertingly like Laura Anderson and the accompaniment is dismantled rather than creatively deconstructed. DJ Orléa's electronic swoops and bleats lead the suite into the martial-sounding "String Tramps", which draws on Das Knaben Wunderhorn; it's also the source of the "Sag of The Prisoner In The Tower", which pitches a gurgling, guitar-driven intro and response against another merrily oblivious romp from Julie Paton.

The songs, and *Das Lad Von Der Erde*, reveal a different Mahler from the obsessive world-builder of the symphonies. Their nerve lies closer to the surface, their snore not yet frozen into well-architectured forms. That's largely why Caine's approach works better here than on his earlier Mahler project *Death/Pausal Light*, where he fell

to the temptation of outgassing Mahler's vision with a clumsy totalising orchestral approach. The very fragmentariness of *Dark Flame*, its bonkers mix of voices and idioms (curiously reminiscent of Catie Bley's *Escalator Over The Hill*, which is a more reassuring flashback than Launé A, before me) is the source of its considerable strength. Mahler wills us enjoy prizing up the threads of melody and in places tearing out some of the biographical references. Others may well approach it as an astute collage punctuated by extraordinary voice like Aaron Dessner's half-canonical, half-muzak banter, Don Byron's bleating clarinet, touches of janglum, doo, ethru and pipa in "On Youth", and through it all Caine's piano, sounding like a classical player momentarily possessed by demons.

This music can only ask itself rhetorical questions and takes up its own existence either comfortably or granted. That is Cage's prerogative but it leaves him like the Masai character, a composer "without qualities", donning and doffing masks in defiance of the emptiness that lures us at the centre of these elaborately layered recordings.

KATHARINE CARTWRIGHT & RICHARD OPPENHEIM

LA FAUTE DE LA MUSIQUE:
SONGS OF JOHN CAGE

HABITATION CANNES 1994/HCW027 CD R

A MUMBAI OF THE MIND:

FERLINGHETTI

IMPROVISATIONS

HABITATION CANNES 1994/HCW028 CD R

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Too many performers approach Cage's music conservatively. Although the interpretative latitude of his post-1950s scores is wide, players often do little more than make a characteristically Cagean sound. It's always heartening, therefore, to hear new approaches to famous compositions such as *Aria*, dedicated to the radical vocal artist Cathy Berberian, which in her lifetime she made very much her own. But *Aria* runs up for grabs, as is true of much Cage material. If his music is to survive, it requires imaginative interpreters.

In some respects, vocalist Katharine Cartwright and saxophonist Richard Oppenheim fit the bill. But although they and their collaborators make a good fist of presenting Cage as a jazz, a music he neither understood nor had much interest in, their approach is fraught with difficulties. The greatest of these is self-imposed: the syllabic conservatism of their musical language. After "4'33", a 1952 composition that was the high-water mark of the musical avant-garde, and which may well have put paid to it, Cage waded very much into experimentalism. The interpretations on this CD of *Aria*, Apartment House and *Solo For Voice No. 1*, 17, 27, 43 and 72 am far from that. At best, they contort Cage in an intriguing way – think John Cowdard's tonically stalled piano ergonomic *Grateful Dead* on *Boyzified*, or "Hiro Special", the rocksteady version of "A Whiter Shade Of Pale" by saxophonist Roland Alphonso on *Red Bomb Ball*. I don't doubt Cartwright and Oppenheim's sincerity, nor deny their musical gifts, but the approach they take does little more than lift Cage's music out of a conceptually large box and cram it into a smaller one.

La Faute De La Musique (*Music Is The Culprit*) is, however, more successful than *A Member Of*

The Mind. Why is it that poetry, that most precise of literary forms, is so often torn apart and reconstructed haphazardly by so-called interpreters? Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poems may often be more stream-of-conscious and casual-looking than those of his peers, but his control of language is exemplary, and his line is so rhythmically compelling and mellifluous that musical interpretation is at best unnecessary, at worst inappropriate. Skiffle expresses identity what the source material does best and either helps it to do its work or reveals it boldly. Cage's readings through Throuse and Joyce are good examples of the latter. *A Member Of The Mind* is not anyone familiar with Ferlinghetti's 1958 collection, *A Coney Island Of The Mind*, will recognise the poems used here, or at least the fragments that remain, and Indo-jazz fans among them might well enjoy the sleek, tabla- and messenger-driven arrangements they've been given. The music is beautifully played (Koenvoe with *La Faute De La Musique*), but Ferlinghetti's often disjoint lines are smoothed out, sweetened and anonymised, and it's hard not to feel that this poetry has seen one too many.

EUGENE CHADBOURNE

GUITAR FESTIVAL SUMMER
1999

USA LR 8867 5800

BACH: GERMAN COUNTRY & WESTERN

VOLUME 1 PROMO CD

BY BEN WATSON

In August 1999, Eugene Chadbourne organised a guitar festival at Tonic on Norfolk Street in New York's Lower East Side. Instead of *Wurst* as a sodden in need shape, Chadbourne proposed a free jam, "as a catalyst of guitar creativity, inspiring many old and great guitar gods". The problem being, greatness ain't always what's cracked up to be.

When they first got the bug in the mid-70s, John Zorn and Chadbourne were much-needed boosts to Derek Bailey's concept of free improvisation. By 1999, though, free improvisation was less grassroots defiance of commercial restriction than a temporary autonomous zone for readymade culture. Disc one documents eight of Chadbourne's encounters with New York's finest, but only Lee Momo and David Watson really engage with him. Jim O'Rourke's back-to-back jazz progressions are beginning enough but aren't helped by the unconvincing, warthogish and furnishings around them. O'Rourke is not an innovator who can expand himself. Chetboone with Leon Mazzacane Connors wiffs into that old sub-Values, a tie with Alan Licht and O'Rourke becomes *Grateful Dead* without drums or County voices (in *The Dead* seems becoming *Insane*). Disc two is dominated by what Chadbourne calls "the Sonic Jesus crew", who generally arrive around midnight. Even *Sex* Discission caused a bit when supporting them at London's Town & Country Club in April 1996, it's been an open secret that the cult post-punk pop of Sonic Youth isn't really noisy enough. First Lee Ranaldo and then Thurston Moore take over the single four-hour-long track on disc two (*Chetboone* disappears after 40 minutes – did he go home?). At 42 minutes, Moore's thrash almost breaks through to Steges-style realms, but repetition and unresponse (minimalism's



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TIM LAWRENCE

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Soundcheck

substitute for the 'no' of silence) finally achieves depths of sedition unheeded in improvised music. This release is a rare example of Chadbourn's boundless waging his judgment.

Chadbourn's meditisa of John Sebastian Bach, though, are a genuine misstep. In fact, German Country & Western is a New-Music masterpiece. Chadbourn was invited to perform at a Belgian festival dedicated to Bach. He practiced *Sonata And Partita No. 2* for violin on banjo for ten months, transposing notes which couldn't fit the banjo's restricted range. At the festival, all the other performances resorted to the 'postmodern' device of sampling or turntablism Bach UPS. Chadbourn's CD sounds like music from an unfurnished cathedral — not the echoey mystery evoked by Jon Hassell, which reproduces the dizzy sonority of oriental sun or Western skull, but a gauzy musical transposition with all its quaint certainties and microdetails intact. The sheer difficulty of transporting cello banjo jams the relentless machinery of conservative interpretations — each key modulation and melodic phrase is encumbered with heart-stopping immediacy. In these conditions, time isn't an ineluctable force beyond human perception; it waits for every futility. You can hear Chadbourn making discoveries. Glenn Gould transformed Bach into something awkward and inspiring; Chadbourn does the task again, wresting the West's legacy of musical invention from the institutional confirmation that overwhelmed it. Sounds great too.

ANDREW CHALK

FALL IN THE WAKE OF A FLAWLESS LANDSCAPE

THREE POPLARS 3919 LP

BY JIM HAYNES

The bulk of tenetous drone composer Andrew Chalk's output revolves around collaborations of some sort or another. Beginning back in the mid-1980s, his career features contributions to the dark broomish *The New Blackaders*, the gritted acoustic phonemology of Dogguran, the interlocking meanderism found in *Dog*, and most recently the picturesquely impressionistic *Mirror* with Christoph Heemann. With all these commitments, it's no wonder Chalk's solo output has been so slim. *Fall In The Wake Of A Flawless Landscape* is his first such project in five years, during which time he has joined numerous successful outings with Mirror. As fruitful as his partnerships have been, Chalk upstages almost all of these previous productions with *Fall In The Wake...*, a beautiful album that is at once minimalist and emotive. Keeping true to his reputation as a reclusive figure, he provides little in the way of clues into his art — no sleeve notes, no external information, just a title, artwork of his calligraphically fluid ink and pencil drawings and two sprawling album sides of drowsing ripples. Complex vibrations dominate Chalk's compositions within a small window of activity, where he emphasizes the precarious balance between dissonance and harmony. Shifting timbral explorations of sympathetic frequencies and glided shimmerings of melodic ranges drive through time and space as an effortless, slow-motion kinetoscope of monochromatic sound. The source materials appear to be bowed guitar, gongs and exulted strings; but regardless of what he's actually performing on, his mastery is in the physical artistry of these sounds.

Even when contextualised with sweeping conceptual ideologies or philosophical undercurrents, the most successful of drone-based musics and minimalist productions often defy the author's intent in their openended communion with the audience. In his purposeful hermeticism and ephemeral poetics, Chalk may well be right in presenting merely a potential for meaning and allowing his listeners to fill the blanks.

LOREN CONNORS

THE DEPARTING OF A DREAM

VOL. III: JULIET

YAMA VINYL 1944 CD

BY DAN WARHURST

"A glooming peace this morning with it brings" — Shakespeare's lines from *Romeo And Juliet* could have been written with Loren Connors in mind. Even in the center of the glutinous extended cœuvre — 40 odd releases to date in a recording career that started back in 1978, including notable collaborations with Suzanne Lengella, Alan Licht, Jim O'Rourke and most recently David Grubbs — the trilogy of solo albums on Family Vineyard evinced *The Departing Of A Dream*, which began with 2002's broad and desperate homage to the events of 11 September 2001, and *Miles Davis' "He Loved Him Medley"*, stands out. With other musicians, Connors makes few concessions harmonically and his playing partners have to choose between active recontextualisation (to quote *Licht*) of his lines or drifting into pretty but pretty lifeless sounding.

Alone, it's a different story. In a typically incisive interview in an American magazine four years ago, Connors bemoaned the fact that none of his work had been released on a major label. Yet it's inconceivable that much of such painful introspection could be concealed in the padded luxury of an expensive studio, mired to sparkling diamond precision and packaged and marketed like tortilla chips: it's fitting that Julian should have been recorded in Connecticut's Brooklyn apartment, complete with the kind of exhaustless noises — creaking furniture and plenty of warm smoky tape his — that a came-hardened sound engineer would have eliminated from the outset. If the opening 20 minutes, "Her Love," is already heartwrenching in its lethargic melancholy, the four subsequent tracks, "Her Hate," "Her Death," "Julie," and "In Eyes Lover" retreat even further into introspection. Only the first invention of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 10 can possibly compare, but where Mahler's agonizingly slow music was personal sorrow wrt life, Connors, like late Beckett, focuses the ultra-condensed short form: The final three tracks together last barely five minutes, making it a pathway to transcend the intensely personal. "Go, have no more talk of these sad things."

ELTON DEAN

SEA OF INFINITY

HUX 050 CD

BY MIKE BARNES

"Stealth Rooming," finds the Elton Dean Quartet giving an object lesson in free music dynamics. Marco Minotto is a massive presence on double bass, constantly reshaping his lines with agitated figures that hint obliquely at bebop, cryptic commentaries and flames of bowed notes. Dean (formerly of Self Machine) is commanding on

alto, his tone grainy but lines sinewy and melodic. Mark Heinein's digital guitar adds unusual textures, ringing out in plangent, bell-like tones — at times it sounds oddly enough for a guitar, like a bowed vibraphone. On drums, Tony Bianco beats against not the musical shapes the other musicians create with tremendous energy.

The pressure slowly builds until nine minutes in when the lid blows, while Minotto's bowed lines spiral up through Heinein's increasingly dense guitar mesh, while Bianco is in danger of being swamped. After some fierce statements, Dean takes a few minutes' rest, pulling the ensemble taut on his marketplace, his lines calling around Heinein's. One of the most satisfying sections of the leads in its conclusion, which feels like a synchronised slowing down of breathing, a deceleration in discrete stages until it's exhausted into a state of rest.

Nothing quite matches the Olympia peaks of the 20 minute opener, but "Boat'n" costs Dean and Heinein in a more reflective duel, the latter again producing that rabbit-wine glass sound with his digital guitar. The musicians demonstrate the sort of rapport gained from playing with each other on and off for 20 years, leaving space before subtly commenting on each other's contributions in an exchange with its fairshare of blunty elements.

The short "Styling" is a curious offering. Dean jumps up around Sibyl Madrigal's poetry, while Heinein rummages on guitar. Whether deliberate or not, her voice is more of a presence than a focal point. The album closes with the 23 minute "Bear Can X," with Marco Minotto's walling electronics augmenting the fiery ensemble playing.

THE DISMEMBERMENT PLAN

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE DISMEMBERMENT PLAN

DISCO 0144 CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Afar ten years of wing songs followed by recording and touring them, *The Dismemberment Plan* decided to call it day as a functioning four-piece during 2003. While fulfilling some outstanding touring commitments, their final gesture was to upload their entire back catalogue, making every track available online for anyone to rework in any way they liked for possible inclusions on one last album release. "The rules were simple," the group explain in their accompanying generousness: "Use what you find, embellish, edit, remasterise as you see fit, and if you like it, we'll put it on the record."

The results work not only as an effective commentary upon the transubstantiation of material and dissolving of collective identity that follow in the wake of a group's breakup but also as an effective sequence of observations on the collapse of an entire industry. If someone told us they preferred one of these remakes to our original song," the group deduce, "we would be puzzeled. It would mean that our songs claim a life beyond us, with no strings attached to our faces, our expressions, our excuses." Divisions between fans, friends and experimenters break down, putting the viciously compressed fun of *Ce:ta's* take on "Academy Award" alongside Drop Dynamix's free-spirited remake of "What Do You Want Me To Say?" and rubbing the mixed Tokyo Club Pop of Qunita/Nakie McCartney's "Life Of Possibilities" up against Grandmaster

Incongruous's shape-shifting "Pay For The Piano". What emerges, as a consequence, is a community that is both temporary and functional, affective yet ready for change, not a bad way to go, really.

CHRISTY DORAN/JOHN WOLF BRENNAN/PATRICE HERAL TRIANGULATION

LEO 12889 CD

BY BRIAN MORTON

They'll tell you that GPS has made old fashioned, tag-based navigation redundant, the same way they'll tell you that GPS has transformed the amateur artist. Sometimes, though, it's more comfortable and a great deal more inspiring to plot your path with a map and compass and using those unsuprising concrete pedestals the Ordnance Survey has dotted all over Britain's hills. The Swiss equivalent is more dramatically sculptural, a pyramid levitating above a hollow base. John Wolf Brennan's photograph of one is on the cover of *Triangulation*.

Two fine sides in Switzerland, he and Doran have recorded before for Leo (1989's *Honeydew* (Dony) is a quiet masterpiece). Since then, Brennan has continued in his own thoughtful vein, while Doran has opened up his New Big, a lumpy jazz fusion outfit. Fortunately, he's back in form for this session. "Envelope Generator" shows he can still do the very sensible of the early solo projects, closer to John McLaughlin than to Jimi Hendrix. Other pieces find him in softer acoustic mode which lies right in the folkish materials that lay behind the earlier collaboration with Bevanza. On that same track, Brennan broadens his spectrum with organ, elsewhere with arpeggiated prepared piano and melodia. His touch on "A Day In The Life Of A Bear (Who Met Her Husband For An Umbrella)" and on the closing "Odeur Perdu," a dedication to the late Seguy Karykhan, is exquisite.

If electronics are the fourth face of the pyramid, it's the extraordinary Patrice Heral who completes the triangulation. His assorted percussions, snares, choral effects and "cizon," basically a hand-made wooden box, create a shifting network of values, mathematically precise but seemingly uncontrollable in real time. Try to follow his route on "Scuppernong Saig," and don't let yourself think that you've got it down till you've listened to it four or five times.

Here are three musical mystics who know that the final mysteries don't come in shimmering lights and大象tears act in hot tubs and log babies. Their interactions is intense but delightfully ingenuous, or rather heterodox. There is something of Paul Klee's spiky biomechanical vision there, tracks, and a precision analogous to what Webern did when he took the many landscapes of the *Tirol* and rendered them down into music as pleasure and as numinous as a map reference.

THE DOUBLE

PALM FRONDS

CATBUT PLATE CRP19 CO

BY MARK MASTERS

The Double was formed in Breda by guitarist David Greenhill and drummer Jeff McLeod, beginning as a math-rock duo prone to quick changes and complex structures. But by the time they were ready to record their first album, *Palm Fronds*, things had changed — Donald Beairn

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Soundcheck

and Jacob Morris had joined the group, the songs had become simpler, and McLeod had temporarily stopped drumming due to an injured hand. Rather than waiting for him to heal, the group enlisted drum machines and a slew of other electronics, wrapping their subdued, childlike tunes inside layers of audio debris. As a result, the songs on *Palm Trees* sound like old paintings lying under dusty rum, with scratchy vocals and chargin' chords providing through crunchy beats, mney when and fuzzy guitars.

The opening track, "Blacked On The Beach", sets the album's template. A loopy beat is coated with distorted chords and spacy noise, then gashed to a low, aching vocal melody that recalls the inspired lethargy of Smeg, Theeater. similarly sun-sung tunes are clothed in similar electronic fur, but Palm Trees' lack of novelty fully compensates for it by its density. The pulsing noise beat of "A Throw Of Distance" shuffles and growls, sounding like Satanic on a cocaine binge, while the best track, "Firecrackers In Sawdust", uses a wavy guitar line and shards of dubby bass three to create a hark of memory. Mc-like echo.

The Doubt's tendency toward naive melody can get overly precious — the druggy "Soul Cosplay" and the stadium organ threeway "Mami" smell like filets. The concluding track, "Black Diamond" provides redemption, however, through a way mesh of rippling textures and burly vocals. The whole mess gradually melts into a fading electric white, which, like most of Palm Trees, echoes in the brain long after its sound has fully desayed.

ENCYCLOPEDIA CIRCLE & THE SQUARE KASUKI KORE PROMO CD

BY CLIVE BELL

David Ross was formerly the drummer with Kenny Process Team, a Cockney Breakfast outfit which delighted fans for years by clattering out sour-sweet guitar melodies. Ross the drummer has now moved on to another London instrumental group, John Blaist's Pocket, but Ross the composer, alias Encyclopedia, has a side project leading percussion workshops in a couple of Waltham Forest clay centres for adults with special needs. Ross made recordings of these sessions in a straightforward manner, by placing a microphone under a table. The result is some of the most beautiful music I have heard for months.

Vibrophones, cymbals and low-pitched drums are deployed, while snaresticks crackle on wood like a chorus line of woodpeckers. Percussion technique here is obviously at a modest level, but it's remarkable how Ross has steeed the limitation on his head and turned it to his advantage. The record achieves a unique and attractive group sound, focused and tight. The half hour song, subtitled "Music For Percussion And Organ Seven Parts", moves gently from one idea to another via careful edits and fades, a method also used on Encyclopedia's earlier *The Body Recklessly In Sound*. A recurring vibraphone theme makes way for shimmering metal chimes, or a six minute gimbali rumba which ends in vocal wails, hopefully wails of delight.

Far more than a workshop document, Ross has cast an album of wonderful playing from an unlikely source.

FAUST VS DÄLEK DERBE RESPECT, ALDER BY DEREK WALMIRE

New Jersey three piece Dälek work on Hiphop's perimeter, shunning boom-boom heaviness in favor of volatile beats, abrasive textures and feedback bleeping lyrics. Their leftfield credentials caught the attention of veteran Krautrockers Faust, currently moving away from their industrial experiments of the 1990s in favour of guerrilla collaboration and remix projects on their Klangbad label. The resulting studio encounter between the two groups turned into the sprawling soundscape documented on *Derbe Respect*. Alder, Faust and Dälek create a harsh, militant beat-scape, with percussion flowing free, both tunefulness and Faust's rhythmic sobs. Dälek's Ophelia and Faust's Janeane Garofalo pile multiple layers of murky dub on top.

After an opening broadside of dark, toxic Ambient, a monumental drum break is unleashed into the echo chamber. Our MC hangs back as he is pounded into a palp bat rats straight into Faust's jazz reggae rhythm section on "Hurdy For Now". "Dead Lies" evens against a deadly undercut of dub bass and Taiko/Maga-esa Can-style rhythmic tangerine. The bass and kick with Faust's sultry guitar hum. Dälek's caustic lyrics evoke an America desensitized to violence, whether in the Middle East or on their own backyard, defying darespoons to "pet me with stones" who you wifly? I trust y'all rather not hear these poems".

Derbe Respect, Alder features just the one straight up Hip-Hop beat, on album closer "T-Electronics" (a different track from that on Faust's *Reverend*). Most of the collaboration is given over to a frenetic territorial struggle between human, jazz presence and monumental industrial overload. The battle displays the implausible, impressive side of Faust, not always to the fore in recent work. As for Dälek it proves a skilled MC can survive the roughest, most inhospitable terrain.

HENRY FLYNT & THE INSURRECTIONS I DON'T WANNA LOUDCLOUD LIB CD BY DAVID KEENAN

Recorded in 1986, *I Don't Wanna* is one of the most remarkable archival recordings yet to emerge from the camp of minimalist composers: conceptual artist and subcultural buiker Henry Flynt. There are nine primitive blues riffslets here, cut by a basement cell led by Flynt on guitar and vocals and featuring keyboardist Art Murphy, Paul Braxton on acoustic bass (always the most "protesting" of instruments) and acoustic Walter De Mare on drums. 1986 was also the year of Flynt's remarkable *Rag*. Electric and the associative moonshiner vocals and "fear", untorious guitar style that illuminated his particular solo session provides the basic coordinates for much of *I Don't Wanna*.

Flynt regularly took guitar lessons from Lou Reed round about this time and while his style is a little more enervated than Reed's, his amphetamine chord slides, there's plenty of "I Heard Her Call My Name"-type electric guitar here. Flynt's open tunings allow him to dig deep into the instrument's most barbed tonalities, matching skeletal solos with droning teetot

hoodowns and scabbly rags that most resemble the idiot avant attack of prime Hal Japanese.

De Maro's drums are all signals and codes, punctuating Flynt's nasal barks with emphatic cymbal and snare cracks and picking up ping-pong rhythms that turn the group's proto-tauri to Rynn's lyrics are smart, satirical bars, pitched somewhere between the sonorous slum poetry of The Fugs circa "Kill For Peace" and Country Joe McDonald's "Hell War War". Here, however, the form is in contradiction to the content, the group's resolute Co-Magcon approach to rhythm and melody combining with their park attitude to technique in a four-four refusal of hypocritically Baroque values, an irredeemable infidelity set to effort and negation. "Nodely talk tan a peace and drop a napalm on you," Flynt sneers on the opening "Under San Jose", "Miseryland Stew" moves into whole new areas of modal mark, while De Mare drops great splits of snare in the background, picking up and abandoning one rhythm before settling on an aimlessly fast martial bassoon. But the title track is the killer, a primeval sides that cloaks into stampy seacocka funk, a showcase for Flynt's singularly degraded technique.

I Don't Wanna is the kind of supernaturally present discovery that sets conventional wisdom on its head, upstaging standard linear accounts of underground rock's development and debasement like setting else since the recovery of Michael Yorkies's avant garage classic, *Moscowhouse Love*. By the time the Velvet Underground split up, Flynt had floored and sank a host of mutant genes that were ten years ahead of most of the rest of the world. Who knows what else is lurking in the shadows?

HILTON RAW A ARTE DA INFELICIDADE [NUMERO 3] TRAVOLTA OR DD CASSETTE CD BY MICK SCOTT-GATE

Hilton Raw is one man. By day he makes his living writing advertising jingles to capsize his fellow Americans. Latin American advertising is a curious affair: a fusion blend of the sarcastic and the straight sell, corporately sponsored distillations of pop cultural hooh and pronostics. This should be no surprise: years of *zombiakia* have trained the average Brazilian viewer to be able to decode subversion almost anywhere, and possibly everywhere, whether it's the political satire contained in the country's remarkably pornographic mainstream cinema, or in a 30 second spot for a mobile phone or carbonated beverage. Hilton Raw, one discerns, is a man who knows all of this and more.

A Arte Da Infelicidade (Numero 3) (loosely The Art Of Disaster, Number 3) is a sublime exercise of samples, funny jazz licks, softly soothly vocals and viciously obscene Heavy Metal guitar. A track like "Longo" is as smooth as the cockpit (last can be, yet shars the album with a fuzz-drenched dirge such as "Despit", Hilton Raw's knowning intention is to mold and merge the clichés of Brasileiro pop, from samba to Speed Metal, into transatlantic anti-louche music. Consequently the familiar is rendered disconcerting by apoligizing these tropes as pop cultural artifacts while simultaneously and mercilessly stripping them of their context. The edictive results are confounding, in their catchiness, a trick Hilton Raw

hasn't perfected for the day job. Portuguese speakers will be able to extract yet more from his flowlessly groovy deconstructions, but here there are pleasures aplenty for the curious monoglot.

ICARUS

I TWEET THE BIRDY ELECTRIC LEAP MUSIC CD/DVD

BY JOHN MULVEY

Although we shouldn't be distracted by this act of thing, it's hard to take a record seriously with a title as evocative as *I Tweet The Birdy Electric*. This, probably, is Icarus's point — to show that at improvised electronic music can be defined by playfulness as much as intellectual rigour. Of course, the effort to be seen as mischievous can be just as self-consciously strained, and Icarus's press release looks to portray them as fine spirts. "Icarus appear to have strolled across a warehouse full of arcane bits and pieces," it claims. "Scores, records, old VHS and VZ magazines and instruments which are now out of tune, broken and almost lifeless."

At least Didi Bown and Sam Britten have largely overcome the devotion to Adelie that made some of their earlier albums look like predictable going on exercises. *I Tweet The Birdy Electric* retains that manic, hyperdelated texture but supplements organic sounds in place of freshly generated ones. "Three False Starts" is especially good, a long wortkout built on heavily processed drums and a rustling drum'n'bass rhythm reminiscent of Karen Heberlin's earliest Four Tet recordings.

"Joker's Crest", "Mutations" and "Frogmatic" are more fragmentary, collage of flitter, squiggle and thereminoid riddim clash pitched somewhere between the wilder side of Improv and the more formal abstractions of Dvel. Again, they're impressive, even if they feel more upright, calculated and much less fun than Icarus envisaged. It's all down to presentation, and the messages their title sends out suggests a certain pantomime iconoclasm which Icarus can't fulfil, notwithstanding the odd chirrup. Dressed more soberly, it would be easier to appreciate the strong musical invention contained within.

VIJAY IYER & MIKE LADD IN WHAT LANGUAGE?

BY MATTHEW INGRAM

This is the album version of pianist Iyer and MC Ladd's originally acclaimed multimedia performance of the same name. Ostalgia, four artists including MC Ladd depict six "lithographs" in chessboard against a video backdrop. The project, inspired by the humbling experiences of Indian film maker Satyajit Ray at the hands of US customs officials, explores "import myths", questioning the political impartiality of these institutions and then handing off "yellow brown-skinned travellers". The recurring motif of the x-ray (the cover image features a radiograph, snapshot of a suitcase) is used to underline the notion that while skin color unjustly motivates state suspicion, all Big Brother should concern itself with is what's in your pockets.

Despite the artists' conviction that the project is "hybrid to the core", the predominant musical theme is modern jazz, unsurprising given the heavyweight credentials of Iyer, a star of Asian improv. This isn't to ignore that Flynt's playing here owes as much to Steve Reich as Don Pullen, the

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the Agriculture - CD/DVD12"

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B.C. GILBERT ORDIER

Though the era of punk was widely regarded as a time of extremes, legendary group Wire and guitarist BC Gilbert provided the most problematic, visionary and ironic response to the music scene of the mid Seventies. The angular minimalism of their sound, the abstract, deadpan lyrics and a penchant for confrontation betrayed the art school origins and made Wire an idiosyncratic triumph.

With bravery, integrity, absolute courage and energy — and as many ideas and concepts as any musician of his era — Gilbert continues to forge ahead. In his post-Wire work, he has utilized a variety of modernist tools and explored a vast range of experimental music, from white noise to ambient drones. *Order* (recorded for Table of the Elements in 1986, but subsequently believed lost) is another combative classic, as Gilbert stirs up a wild swarm of electronics with his usual deft touch.

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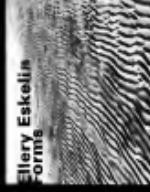
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uncomfortable Jungisms of "The Density Of The 19th Century" and the more successful electric chrome chug of "The Color Of My Circumference" it went to Ladzi's input. While the text provides ample motivation for this wilfully eclectic collage of sounds, charting an arc down the trajectory of disparate individuals through the atmosphere of the airport, Ladzi is particularly impressive in character as Julian Nardino and the most transmuted jazz architects here. It's a shame, therefore, to hear so little of him — other presences are less dramatic, requiring the benefit of being witness to onstage.

This fusion of performance poetry and jazz carries echoes of The Last Poets, the apocalyptic ambitions of Archie Shepp's Africa Blues, shades of Ornette's style's jazz-inflected Spiral Mills Containing Autumns Of Light and even dystopian touches from Jon Hassell's City: Works Of Fiction.

KAMPEC DOLORES + ISTVAN GRENCSO KONCERT!

KÖRPERWERK KIPOS CD

BY MIKE BARNEA

Budapest group Kampec Dolores don't really fit into any genre yet reference mang and Koncert! is an excellent introduction to their singular music. Vocalist/violinist Gábor Kendresi and guitarist Csaba Horvay have been with the group throughout their 20 year lifespan, while drummer Andris Halma and Árpád Vasszon, on electric and acoustic bass, provide the liltile, flexible rhythm section. In this live setting their sound is typically lean, although on "Dzangang," echoed waltz-guitar and vocals create a spacious atmosphere, together with the long unswelling finale line of guest István Gréncsó. The introduction of "Kalmáro" sounds like it could have been performed in a remote village about the time Béla Bartók was collecting folk songs, until it metamorphoses into a lengthy episodic piece. Kendresi's voice is the most distinctive aspect of the group; her molasses drawing on jazz and folk elements. Although the subtleties and nuances of her lyrics are obviously lost on a non-Hungarian speaker, one can take notice in the fact she also makes up her own language. Floorwheeling through a series of styles, she displays the timbreless of traditional Eastern European styles with high whoops, hiccups and shamanic ululations. All the group play with a pointed rhythmic sense, not least Kendresi, who axes jazz style syncopations on "Egy Délre Néz", while the instrumental backing is influenced by the rhythmic complexity of Hungarian indigenous music.

Grençső provides a perfect foil to her singing, gently sparring with her occasional forays into taut-and-loose vocal lines, raw and empathetic when the situation calls. In common with all the musicians here, he knows when to leave space, often disappearing for most of the song. Yet when he does play, you can't help but take note. These 83 minutes of music, dating back to the late '80s, are neatly rounded off by two recent studio songs similar in mood to the live material.

HANS KOCH LONDON DUOS AND TRIOS INTAKT 081 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

late in 2000, Swiss reeds player Hans Koch engaged in a series of small group combinations

with some of the most distinctive contributors to London's thriving community of improvisers. Each track is from studio sessions, one was captured live at the splendidly wavywood Kirkin Club. There are duets with the electronics of Paul Thomas, Phil Minnor's voice, percussionist Reggi Tarnet, harpist Rhodri Davies and double bassist John Edwards. This brings Koch together with Edwards and drummer Steve Noble, with Davies and cellist Mark Westcott, with Minnor and host Turner then violinist Phil Dunn.

Idiosyncratic performers all, yet Koch sounds fully attuned to each improvisation. He performances clearly aim to establish a lingua franca, deep access and surface consistency, without sacrificing the dynamism of the playing situation. He moves easily among the various musical dialects and matches the specific gait of the occasion. Koch has evolved a refined capacity for responding with compatible sounds. His contrabass clatters burns and buzzes to integrate with Thomas's static and sci-fi sonorities, his bass clarinet sneezes, coos and whinges to blend with Minnor's expressive vocalise. Soprano sax pecks and clicks among the scatter of Turner's floor percussion, then chatters endlessly against Edwards's bass thump and rumble. These ideas and thus tends to Koch's mentality, modulating tension and inflection to meet and develop the terms for each encounter. They also register the fertility of the London scene, extending common ground to the visiting musician without compromising the music's edge and exploratory energies.

ARTO LINDSAY SALT

RIGHTEOUS RAGE RECORDS CD

BY MARC MASTERS

Salt, the solo solo album from former DNA guitar wiz and Ambitious Lovers hybrid-style Art Lindsay, is strongly like an aging animal that attacks only after a day's worth of preening. Even for diehards, this record's slow walking requires patience, maybe even more than it deserves. While there's always been interesting stuff bubbling under Lindsay's superrhythmically smooth Branigan pep, here it takes longer to ever to surface. In fact the first few tracks are almost pure gloss, fat and understated lounge music void of tension or surprise.

But halfway in Salt's peeks up, "Javert" quackes the record's pulse, mixing rippling percussion and vibebombing guitar into a snap such that Lindsay's previously lax vox finds its leaner shape. The title track adds density to the acceleration, sounding something like an air-conditioned version of Autobahn with its melting of random mechanical beats and giddy whistles. The strongest sign of life on Salt is "De Lame Lamme", a three-dimensional soundscape info with spikes and slopes. Wringing rooftop percussions and bursts of noise around Lindsay's robotic rap, the song casts on its own plane, distant from the rest of the album. Such streamlined experiments are further evidence of Lindsay's success in crafting dance pop with an avert rock edge, even if it has required a predilection for both styles to be truly enjoyed.

Lindsay's last few albums were more grooving and varied, even enlisting members of Brooklyn's Animal Collective at one point to help add angles to the vacuous tones. Salt might have benefited from more of these adventures.

MEAT PUPPETS CLASSIC PUPPETS

RHYTHM & BLUES 084 CD

BY MIKE PARKER

"It's kind of like people laughing at a block of concrete, or something," said Meat Puppets' Curt Kirkwood about live rock back in 1985. "There's this thing that doesn't really exist, especially after it's been played it doesn't exist anymore... it's like a corner animal or a corner star." Quotable like those in this Best Of booklet are invaluable in obtaining a handle on a mercurial group, whose attitude, imagination and intelligence set them well apart from 80s rock ordinariness. Classic Puppets shows the speed at which they developed since their incarnation in 1981, when they recorded merely brief hardcore splashes with vocals pricked somewhere between yelling and growling, in a bedrooms with a four-track machine.

Curt Kirkwood, bass player brother Greg and drummer Derrick Booton all grew up with Country music and these years on, their music reflected this sort of gait, older strengtheners that R&B had tapped into on their first three albums. But they went much further up on high to tell of bizarre wists on "Pleasure", while the ragged "Oil Of Fire" is a desperate warning of the pangs they in store for "bad folks".

By 1986 Kirkwood was displaying the spongy, often Ephedrine, fingerpicking guitar work that characterised their subsequent output. "Up On The Sun" opens with a typically opaque proclamation — "A long time ago I turned to myself and said 'You are my daughter'" — while the group howled through the sort of wailing structures that distinguished them. The problem was that Curt had a tendency to write songs in keys that didn't suit his vocal range. Instrumental decoration can be exhilarating, but a deep-rooted anthropological discomfort often accompanies the human voice sagging out of tune. He just about gets away with his too low rurit stat, until it goes out on a wing and a prayer, holding the second syllable of "alone" for 15 seconds, while oscillating microscopically around the intended notes.

There is a happy ending, of sorts, to Meat Puppets' story. After gleaning on Nirvana's 1993 Unplugged MTV show, their albums for London, The Age To Die In and No Joke add well for continued reasons: neither fizzles home, but you do get a 1988 recording of Curt Kirkwood going out as The Royal Neanderthal Orchestra, which sounds up to scratch. He once told his mother he was trying to stop time, to which she replied, "You take too many fucking drugs." This excellent compilation confirms her diagnosis.

MISSION OF BURMA

ONOFFON

MADONNA CULTURE CD

BY GLENN BROWN

Mission of Burma recorded fewer than two dozen songs during their brief but blindingly intense stint from 1979 to 1983. But contained within their limited output was an orbit topography of American post-punk, its peaks and ridges, its knifed-off immediacy, desperation, optimism and heart. Some songs were hopeful mirthens, like "Academy Fight Song"; others were darker, more exiguous explorations, like "Item Two". Burma released their first album, Vs, in 1982; DNow!, released 22 years later, is their

second. The album glows white-hot with fury and energy, familiar yet fresh. Much as Wier's angry, snarling 2003 comeback *Soul Blasted* straight ahead with scant nostalgic regard for the softer subtleties of their early work, *Oilfield* emphasizes urgency, its confident up roar masking older tendencies to ponder and experiment. Then again, when you get a soft punch in the stomach like this, you feel the visceral impact of this blow first and consequences its experimental tendencies later. Although some of the Clint Conley-penned songs are reminiscent of his more pop-oriented indie rock group Corrosion and his ballad "Prepared," reveals Burns's gentle side, most of the rest: blazes with the intensity of a jet engine.

Burns sound tighter and more focused after gauging frequently for the past two years. Bassist Conley and guitarist Roger Miller make more of an obvious effort here to engender mood of shout. As in old Burns, Peter Prescott's drumming is not merely a steady accent to Conley and Miller but a torrent of noise in its own right. "Falling" swallows and喘息es, "The Enthusiast" sounds like a series of explosions.

Oilfield is a potent, jarring reminder of rock's ability to engage with the head and heart, and a heartening example of a group's ability to come back screaming after two decades of silence.

ROSCOE MITCHELL

SOLO 3
MUTABLE MUSIC 1918102020

BY JULIAN COWLEY

Envisaged initially as a single disc, multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell's Solo 3 grew to the bulk of a triple as he amassed usable material, and also because "time is going on by". Now, after all, more than 40 years since he emerged as one of the most widely imaginative yet rigorous contributors to Chicago's 1960s ferment of advanced musical creativity, the mass of material on this new release is made less daunting by the allocation to each disc of a distinct identity. The first, "Tech Ritter And The Megalynx", is thankfully not a compressed Country pastiche but a variegated selection with sinewy waves of muffed-tronos; a pastoral interlude for flute and percussive; and convoluted, cumulatively dazzling soprano saxophone solos.

The third disc is entitled "The Preservation Cage And Music On The Go". Mitchell has been an fervent advocate of "small instruments", pocket and unorthodox resources used to nudge music making away from footloose with technical finesse and direct engagement with sound. His "percussion cage" is an enclosing frame hung with gongs, drums, bells, cymbals and associated small instruments. On each brief piece in this series he sounds the cage to resemble a meditative horn line rather than a battery sprung out a sequence of varied colours, timbres and textures. Embedded among them is a set of the meirical flights on soprano sax, collectively "Music On The Go", acid-toned and agile.

The central panel of the triptych, "Solar Flares For Alto Saxophone", comprises ten solos that show Mitchell at his most melodic and fluidly inventive. Stepping aside from overtly radical structure and aggressively forceful execution that have been features of his earlier solo outings, he blows and flows, a sunsoaked pianoforte moving with ease and drift changes of pace through a

lens of opulence. At times circular breathing enables him to move urgently at a teetering run; elsewhere he saunters, savouring this route. He is a ruggedly elegant, steering clear of effects and embellishments. Throughout his musical life from bold AACM experiments to his accomplished chamber ensemble compositions, Mitchell has raised questions, challenged assumptions, pointed at horizons; he has rarely sounded so welcoming as he does on "Solar Flares".

PHILL NIBLOCK

DISSEMINATE
MOON 171 CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

Many albums today are tagged with the recommendation "PLAY LOUD". This one doesn't, but it certainly should. With Phill Niblock's music it's not just a question of giving your neighbours the finger in the ear but nothing less than absolutely essential. His pieces are the kind that need to fill the listening space entirely to reveal what the composer describes as their "deeds of sum and difference tones" — they're very much driven to "get inside", to quote La Monte Young. This CD contains two versions of *Disseminate*, an orchestral work originally commissioned in 1998 by Per Nørgård for his SEM ensemble, in recordings made in Ostrowo by Kofik and the Ensemble OCHM (with members of Józefów Philharmonic) and Gert, with Brussels's Q.O.Q. Ensemble.

For the latter, six versions of the piece were recorded by five musicians and mixed together, and the distinctive colour of the instrumentation — viola, cello, piano, saxophone, fife and tom-tom — is more evident. The larger forces used in the Czech Republic result in a thicker and harmonically denser sound, a darker cloud to borrow Niblock's analogy. The gradual corruption of the pure octave D through incremental microtonal displacement recalls the incidental music Cleon Branch penned for Peter Greenaway's *Belly Of The Beast*, but whereas his quixotic vignettes lasted barely two minutes, Niblock goes the distance, expanding a unison out into a minor third over 22 minutes.

The two *Disseminate* readings bookend the 22-minute *Kontakhtocassiopeia*, written in 1999 for a unusual yet typically Niblockian combination of contrabass fife, contrabass sawophone and contrabass tuba. For reasons of balance, Niblock followed what has become his customary practice, recording samples of the instruments in a studio that were subsequently pitchshifted and mixed together into a 24-track recording for the musicians to play along with in concert.

TARA JANE ONEIL

BONES
PRESERVATION FREDDIE CO

BY TOM RIDGE

Tara Jane O'Neil first surfaced as bass player in Louisville's Rodan before going on to a signed musical career with The Sonics, Poco, Ratos and The Nayans, while also finding time to contribute to numerous other projects, including albums by Come and Popa M. Her solo work reflects the diversity of these experiences but channels them through a left-field anglo-saxonguitar style. Reissued on Australia's Preservation label, *Bones* compiles tracks from hard to find 7" releases and EPs alongside songs recorded in Louisville and Olympia over the last few years.

What this collection lacks in homogeneity it compensates for in diversity, from stripped down acoustic songs to more experimental material, making it an intriguing introduction to O'Neil as a solo artist. The more direct songs feature her quiet, exposed voice against minimal backing, in loose, flowing structures. Sometimes she quotes from familiar sources — "Rumors Yellow Belly" and "High Wire" quietly nod towards Leonard Cohen and Nick Drake respectively — while the openness of some of the arrangements recalls Tim Buckley's *Blue Afternoon* in spirit if not style. These songs are interspersed with more oblique pieces, occasionally little more than brief experiments with gently colliding noise and melody, featuring piano, strings and electronics. Sometimes the music suffers for being almost too self-effacing, but mostly it bears up to deeper investigation.

PENPUSHERS

ART MECHANICS

INCORPORAL INC0005 CD

BY NECK SOUTHFARE

Hip-Hop's roots are sunk deep into the dense and turbulent aftermath of the United States yet America's cities are young compared to London, Birmingham or Edinburgh. Maybe this is why UK Hip-Hop acts have previously struggled to co-opt the musical form. By necessity UK Hip-Hop's roots will have to be sunk very, very deep. This would demand a project of intelligence and history likely to deter the crazily commercial or mercenarily opportunistic, but certainly creates a stark canvas for a determined artist.

Edinburgh is, therefore, the perfect Hip-Hop city, its resilience of urban experiment broken and rebuilt on its central axis outcrop. Surveying the contemporary verdigris are Penpushers, a loose collective of turntablists, producers and writers. The mini-album *Art Mechanics* is their second release on the label they co-own and the Edinburgh's unforgiving look.

The Penpushers' style is darkly lyrical and musically unpredictable. There is a sense of mounting a constant movement in the back streets of the city, the shadows of the mind and the depths of the soul. Obvious parallels can be drawn with crossover success *The Streets*, but stripped totally bare of cocky generation. The opening and standout track is "This Old Guitar", focusing a looping and amorphous dirty blues guitar riff stalking under a menacing half-spoken, half-sung lyric somewhere between Beck and Sleaford's magnum opus "Good Morning, Captain". No surprise, either, to detect in its lyrics a gloomy reference to the impact of the city's ravages upon the human condition, William Blake.

PERLONEX/JULIJUNI

PERLONEX/JULIJUNI

HAPPY ZOOTZ 2CD/1000 LP

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

This vinyl only release is the first in German label Happy Zootz's limited edition Splitting Series. It's a similar idea to the Fat Cat series of split 12" — the two improvising trios Perlonek and Julijuni are each given a side apiece. Perlonek are Jürgen Schick on various objects, turntables etc, Jörg Mans Zeger on guitar and Burkhard Beits on percussion, all musicians who are active in various other improvising contexts. The Perlonek side begins with a drone and delicate, looping guitar

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Size Matters

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Good eggs? Ova

KK Null is widely and correctly lauded as one of the fathers of Japanese noise guitar, but on *Prosecutor* (Sunring/Ber la Muerte)

SUNSHIPI36/B/R28 3" CD) his new split with Italian noisiers **Ova**, the stylings are electric insipid, and how the worse for it really. Null's track is full of gutting gan bleeds and jumps, laid across show-within-slabs of synths woooo. The two tracks by Ova were remixed by *Minnigawagnish*, and continue staid sounding sequencer basics with winningly anarchic overlays. Especially savage in this respect are the six blats that slice through the latter part of "Tele," but the whole thing is just clandy.

Pop mestizo **Lilie Archer** returns with his jillionth record, *Buy Boy/Hollywood Spark* (Bright Star BSR026 7"). And while there are references to him being a "Christian" anarchist on the web, there's nothing here I can complain about. The Ray Davies it is to the B-side of the single is as additive to my ear as it's had been out by La Teng. The way it fits with shimmering falsetto longing, sinks me hard enough to make goosebumps all over my ass. Perhaps I'm just getting soft.

North American **Ashleit** say they have invented a new kind of drum 'n' bass, and when I try to argue with them? *Utopia* (Inn Light-LIGHT026 7") certainly defies many of the genre's conventions, so we might as well give the benefit of the doubt. Excellent use of dub dynamics and vocal inflections from somewhere godz certainly add life to the basic pulse and plub of their speedrun architecture. But why is it only one side?

Former C4 member Stephen Thrower has long been involved in a sound projection unit called **Cyberde**, which now seems to have boiled down to him and another Coll collaborator, Ossian Brown. On their new single, *Remember*, Archangel/Psychedelic/Pathfinder (Klang Galerie GG70 7") the pair have assembled some very cleanly toxic. Built upon slowly surging waves of keytar, one finds mucky boots, sacking chest wounds and churchas viewed through mist. Placidly nihilist, these are curlicues of guitar that almost remind me of Six Organs, while artifice cloisters in the background, and capricious slalom is the waves. Other parts have the low key jolts of dance hall spes having at it. Anyway, it's a very pleasing instrumental mess, no doubt about it.

An hour's the second ingenious noise peep from Sacramento duo **Duchess Of Saigon**,

Hostess Party (+3 (Plastic Idol PIRO01 7") is another grant run into the bush of the unknown, combining gal/guy dynamics in a manner that recalls Austin Wiggin Jr.'s gaest turns with The Shaggs, or some damn thing. Drums, guitar and voice combine for a sound that is both lonely and disturbed, even when they're trying to re-create minimalist versions of Brian Wilson's harmonic vista. It's as brash as a new wave garage band formed by a couple of domkeys with titi hair, and I mean that as a compliment.

Another swell release has arrived from an upstairs New York unit called **Evidences**. The duo of Stephan Moore and Scott Smallwood, conjur up weird involving soundscapes that create and insinuate unexpected buckets of constructional and musical integrity on *Woodpecker/Old Storage* (Televis TVR003 7"). Unlike many people working in the deep listening continuum, this pair (especially on the A-side) are surprisingly interested in inventing forms of beauty that are easily grasped. The flip is much more abstract — something like the sound of asphalt being recycled while down attempts to put out a car fire in the background, but that's not a complaint.

Robert Van Hoesen plays laptop for The Office!, a Dutch organization dedicated to a merger of live and electronic improvisations (this is what I've been able to glean, anyway). For his new solo work, *Solitude Sample* (Hand Hot Area premo 3" CD) Robert has put together four tracks based on test by Paul Auster. This is not to infer that there are many audible words — far from it. The sounds are sparse and extremely minimal. There's one part where some people are making mouth noises in the background while a guy tries to get into his car with a can opener, but apart from that, most of the events have sound like they're electronically generated (or treated) and are open to any kind of narrative interpretation that the listener may care to create. My favorite has to do with robotic rabbits attempting to chew their way into cyberspace (by strategy), but yours may be rather different. And very set!

Karaoke Inferno is the solo project of Robin Schmidt of the Australian experimental group Dceanand Happy Times for All. They have had a couple of regressive earlier releases, but the newest is in hand, entitled *Worlds In Collision* (Ritter J! Presso 3" CD). There are four tracks, all of which are built around discernible beats without being the least bit danced. Small

sequences canon around empty spaces until they begin to produce dissonances in the distance that interact with the blank landscape like volcanic plumes in constant eruption on the face of a teenage sode jerk. *Karaoke, eh?* Sing along if you care.

Mixed Band Philanthropist are a New Blackness offshoot with a legendary LP monogram in the collection of a few obsessives. They were long presumed dead and buried, so imagine my delight upon receiving a new single by them, *Who Maiskob A Real Woman for His Muse and Acted*. *Accordingly/After Hearing Known Misfortune and Seven By Their Mistresses* (*Hypnagogia OG001 7"*), which is a classic chunk of destroyed music concilis. Assembled from a variety of musical and spoken sources, this is a nonstop barrage of genres filled with headscrapping changes, sexual innuendo and general confusion, it's a totally good listening experience, harking back to the manual assemblies of Orchid Spanglers and certain of Husk With Woods's more beautifully ominous phases. From the looks of it the initial tapes are archival, although the A-side appears to have been enhanced by more contemporary manipulation as well. And that's just ducky.

Interesting new split single by **No-Fi Soul Rebellion and Voluntas**. Ch'trol'y Day Cop (Wantage USA WAN028 7"), the former N.F.Soul Rebs are a strangely funky husband/wife/kidsie duo from the wilds of Montana. Their sound is a mix of minimalist hippos, garage soul action and a 60s sensitivity, sort of, which all comes together in a surprisingly decent way. Lemmon Hall from the same rugged climes and produce something that is very new wavy and riff-heaving at the same time. The vocal has that squarely edge you can either bear or not, but their handling of miniature figures is no less acute (albeit in a more groovy way) such as when mastas as Dinosaur and so forth. Which means it's potentially easy to hate, but it has a certain allure as well. Having played it few times this evening, I am more stampy by this single every time it spins. In one sense, it's too poppy to hang onto, but in another it's faceted enough to dig. What's a guy to do?

Polet Like Please are a duo from Portland, Oregon who do a very nice job of crafting ameche-power wobble with just a synth and a drum and throat. Their new single, *Curse Chorus Curse/Sh...beam* (S-S-SS008 7") is sonically

located somewhere between Suicide and the current crop of No Wave/New Wave artrock engineers. They manage to come up with something that is evil and eggy, while being very stupid at the same time. This is a pretty hip trick, since most of their listeners go for either one of these modes or the other. And truly, variety is the variety of life; so the more facets they wear the merrier we listeners ought to be. Good stuff.

Best known (perhaps) for his studio work with *Mount and Current 93*, **Colin Potter** has also produced a substantial body of solo work. One of his latest releases is *Re:Ovalia/A Little Country Music* (Wang Galeria OG056 7"), which is a beautiful whisper of lost sounds. "*Ten Drills*" sifts through its changes with several levels of synthesizer and voice making space for each other, then coming close to applying rouge on each other's cheeks. "*A Little Country Music*" includes some of the best voices heard from a room away since Gong's classic era, all set to a propulsive space beat. Who knows what this record has a very unusual old-school underground Preg feel to it. Which may not be something I expected, but, man, it sounds great.

The British artist known as **Vessel** has a new one, *fold/crowd control + Anna (Expanding Record EVS2-03 7")*, which has a pleasantly pappy take on repeat-o-fiff electronic strokery. On all three tracks, the layers of melody accrue around a mystery pulse, the way that shit builds up on a Christmas tree sold rapidly in and out of God's ass. There is a vaguely cinematic feel to the proceedings, and things don't really resolve themselves very much, but they really move forward in a manner that sooths. Parts almost sound like the orchestra version of Abubakar Bells head from inside a cab sitting in the cab of a trendy club whilst the cabbie tears apart balloons with his teeth as quietly as he can manage. And that can be pretty quiet.

With Love are a reputable indie rock band with a fairly ordiavive, if somewhat elusive discography. Happily, we were able to land a copy of *Iceage Generation* (Meronic OG06 7"). Admittedly, this is another one-sided record, but each nonmasculine side has an original engraving by Nico Vassellot, so what the hell? And the music on the other side is pretty hot. There are blasts of well-heated noise energy, there are kind of Sonic Youth-style glitch-silences, there are semi-jazzy pieces of drum and piano. And then there is you, the listener. *Okay!* □ Reviewed by Byron Coley

arpeggio before heading into a post-industrial, post-AMM landscape full of feedback, clanking chains and unpredictable scrapes and thuds. The piece gathers density as it moves along, becoming a thickly matted assembly of sounds, with the guitar loop as a constant. Perlonen is a cohesive unit and they all pull in the same direction when they play producing a committed and intense pieces of group communication.

Johann's sound sources are Powertool, feedback and guitar, coming from Michael Reiter, Tim Tetzner and Anger Wilkes respectively. Their three tracks are finer but less assured than the Perlonen side. As with Perlonen, recognisable guitar sounds are set against hiss, scratches, unmade noises. The music is light-footed and shifts readily from episode to episode. Their sense of space steers them away from thick textures. The guitar is again used gracefully but the lapses occasionally sounds sluggish compared to the other sound sources. The music is fitfully engaging but none of the pieces quite hang together as a fully on-the-ball performance.

LOU REED ANIMAL SERENADE

GATE, REPRISE 495762 2CD

BY RYAN HOLLOWAY

The back cover of *Animal Serenade*, Lou Reed's sixth official live album, features the shadowed profile of a mandrill – the magnificent ape which, when in captivity, is notable for baring its colourful backside to the public. Hardcore fans of the man may find it hard to dismiss the visual suggestion that Reed is doing something similar here, as he pens through the rather tenuous arc of his career as a solo artist and blabs it out in front of an audience, whose ecstatic shouts of "LOU!" sound vaguely like "BOO!"

Recorded at Los Angeles' The Wiltern last June, Reed's playlist includes selections from such albums as *Mexican*, *Street Hassle* and *The Blue Mask*, all of which had their moments but were certainly nothing like his best work. Here, however, these songs are given a new lease of life as Reed kicks back in leisurely fashion with his group, made up of guitarist Mike Ratke, bass player Fernando Saiz Reinoso, cellist Jane Scarpantorni and vocalist Antony. He chats amiably with the assembled throng and drifts effortlessly from song to song with a confident professionalism that, whether you enjoy what he's doing here or not, deserves admiration.

Reed's choice of Antony, from Antony And The Johnsons, as backing vocalist is inspired. His bright tech singing adds an extra dimension to songs like "Get Your Head" and especially "Candy Says" which, like his "Perfect Day" solo on last year's *The Raven*, reinvents a classic without trashing the memory of the original.

Those who misinterpreted this record's title as signifying a return to the rocking hedonism that flooded through his earlier Rock 'N' Roll Animal live album, however, will be sorely disappointed. Reed has not forgotten how to rock out ("Set The Night Reeling"), it's just that he chooses to hold back most of the time. Even on "Henny" (which he delivers by inserting a reference to "I'll Be Your Muse" for no reason), the arpeggiating guitar scree of jive now sounds digitally tamed, while Scarpantorni's sensually scraped cellos accompaniment merely compensates for the expected jet engine whine that John Cale produced from his sawing viola, thus reducing

the paranoid power of the song to just another singalong lou exercise.

We hear his version of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" ("Maybe you were forced to read this in high school, Tonatiuh. But it's been rewritten, my man," he smugly says in his introduction), plus rearranged selections from Berlin and *Ecstasy*. Unfortunately he chooses to deliver the overcooked latter a album's title track, rather than the extended guitar workout "Like A Peasant". The latter would have lent the beautifully performed, but otherwise inadvertent selection some of the rebellious spirit and turbulent invention we've come to expect from Reed.

THE REMOTE VIEWER YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE OUR DEFEATIST ATTITUDE

CITY CENTRE OFFICES BLOCKS 601/602 CD/DLP

BY JOHN MUDNEY

Like Münch, Sean and a clutch of producers on the Maré Music label, Manchester's Remote Viewer blur the margins between electronica and the more adventurous, effete school of indie pop Craig Fortescue and Andrew Jenkins know this latter territory well, biting out their teeth in the unfriendly doleful Hood. And at times on this swift but pensive album, the clichéd sadness impulse wins out. The opening title track, sung by Nicola Hodgkinson (another Hood collaborator), is grey and sombre enough to pass for the work of their old group, while "Listening To Ballad Of The Bard" references an old folk record (2002's *Here I Go*) on Old Ben paid similar homage to another 80s institution, the Ge-Betweens.

Tatarsall and Johnson are clearly aware of how hackneyed such stances malleably can sound, hence the album's title and the similarly enthusiastic "Let's Not Be Much About It". But such self-deprecation, as if they're born between celebrating their fitness and despairing their shortcomings for it, only compounds the weakness. Mostly, though, they're much more successful when they drift away from their roots and embrace electronica a little more wholeheartedly. "We Named It After You" is Morehouse, after a fashion, and either wins or it, though it's a mark of how quietly efficient *The Remote Viewer* has become at sustaining an atmosphere that, even here, the glistens are more redundant of patterning than digital debris.

REVOLUTIONARY ENSEMBLE THE PSYCHE

MUTABLE MUSIC 01584 CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

In 1972 the Revolutionary Ensemble registered their presence with recordings on the cutting edge ESP and India Navigation labels. Four years later, the trio's music attained a degree of high profile exposure when *The People's Republic* was issued on AGM's enterprise Honon subsidiary. Prior to this, in 1975, violinist Leroy Jenkins, bassist Stone (Worm Jones) and drummer Jerome Cooper had taken matters into their own hands, releasing *The Psycho*. It limited numbers under their own RE imprint. At last its three tracks – Cooper's "Invasion", Stone's "Ha-Ha", Jenkins' "Cal Logic" – can be heard more widely.

Stone had previously played with the incendiary spirits of New York's free jazz scene – saxophonists Noah Howard, Arthur Doyle and Pharoah Sanders, guitarist Steve Shirock and drummer Sunny Murray. He was also entering a fruitful phase with pianist Cecil Taylor. But the expanded conception brought out of Chicago by Jenkins and Cooper enabled him to explore, within the maverick chamber music of the Revolutionary Ensemble, other dynamics, different textures, moods and relationships between instrumental voices.

Jenkins has an inlove tone, coiling fluently around and out from thematic cells. But although his looping line tends to dissolve with great clarity the figure latent in the music's field, the rest result establishing a hierarchy of voices. Each member is allowed solo space and duets occur: Stone's double bass and Cooper, occasionally on piano as well as drums, draw in force but their input is thoroughly spontaneously compositional rather than supportive and secondary. Their weight and density are articulants. As The Psyche confirms, the poise of the energetic interplay between all three made the Revolutionary Ensemble special.

RLW VIEWS

ANOMALOUS NOISES CD

BY RYAN HOLLOWAY

After a recording career that already stretches over 25 years, involving collaborations with Achim Whelchel, Bernhard Günter, Andrew Chalk, David Grubbs, Jim O'Rourke, Kevin Drumm and Bruce Russell, not to mention his own FFB 04 ensemble, Ralf Inwischau finally presents his first solo collection. Presented with out titles but with detailed notes on the methods and practices behind each, the four tracks represent shily shaded perspectives on studio performance and procedures.

Sporadic movement and reconstructions shade each other closely here. Four self-programming oscillators, controlled by wheels rather than a keyboard, interact to create a densely strated carpet of sound on the prefabricated opening composition. Shorter, more unexpected but no lessarming, the next two pieces have the feel of secret rituals conducted in private. On the first, four spontaneous musical actives, neatly involving off-passage instruments designed for children, are masked into a profoundly meditative sequence, marked by the chiming of bells. The second, in which two music boxes are manipulated, squeaked and muted, transforms the mechanistic responses of half-forgotten tunes into a series of everyday memories. Coming on a single thin line of feedback, the fourth and final composition combines elements of the previous three, plus recordings of electric guitar runs backwards and forwards into an unobtrusive but complex series of structures and introductions.

Serious minded yet subtle, unburned and unforced, *Views* is a work of deep coherence, vitality of content and unquestionable richness.

SKALPEL

SKALPEL

NAJA TUNE ZENYK CD

BY NICK SOUTHWAITE

Having previously flimed with Ninja Tune via mixes on the Solid Steel radio show, Skalpel duo Marion Cieci and Igor Pudlo now release their first album for the label. In Poland, the pair are revered enough to have been nominated for the prestigious cultural prize, the Pezony Polityki. This release deserves to see them reviewed far beyond Poland.

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The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Solving bills: AG

Curated by WIRE contributor Philip Sherburne,
Splitting Bits, Closing Loops: Sound On Sound, originally available as a CD supplement
to volume 13 of the Leonardo Music Journal,
has now been given its own separate existence,
courtesy of the Electronic Music Foundation.

Courtesy of the Electronic Music Foundation
(EMF94/CD), Edited by Nicolas Collins. *AMU 13* was famously foisted around the snail mail as significant piece of statistical fluff in 1999, at a time when CDs had comprehensively replaced vinyl on the megastore shelves; most turntables were being sold than electric guitars, the implication being that the turntables were being used for playing with rather than just playing back. Accompanying the work of 12 artists whose methods loosely correspond with the storage mechanics of playback is never going to be an easy task. Locate them too closely together and you run the risk of cataloguing a 'movement', when more often, take one casual a response

and it can look like unauthorised dabbling. Sheardine negotiates this problem with ease, supplying only a general critique gloss to his selection and thus allowing the pieces to speak for themselves, quite literally in the case of AGF's opener, 'Les's Code', which stations and listeners over random lines of encryption. The extract from John Schlesier's 'R.I.P.' realistically sounds the speakers, while Stephen Yirabé's 'Slow Reverb' gives a strong sensory impression of the random blurring produced by accelerated listening. However, those intrigued by such pieces would be well advised to visit the LNU website (mpress.msu.edu/LNU/), where most of the contributors have posted more detailed accounts of how their respective compositions came into being. They have some interesting stories to tell. (RH)

A bad joke, putting on "but," with which Andrew Elton opens *We ... NOW! A Musical Petition Against George W Bush* (Passive Aggressive PWR001 CD) at least raises the question how best to protest against current brute force outrages and state violations of life and liberty. The register of response on the compilation encompasses classic protest songs, taunting, lampooning or voicing earnest resistance, the snarling anger of Scott Rosenberg's bariitone saxophone solo and the determined independence of Jeff Wright's speech; Elliott Sharp's steel guitar and laptop execution of bleak times; Loren Conner's blithe lamentation for Thomas Paine, author of *The Rights Of Man*; punk versus from Threat Langauge and some distressing samples of the President's own hometown vituperation. Glenn Branca's slateatoners speak frankly of "bleeding coup," "virtual Dictatorship" and "shock exercise of Power." Yet Bush himself, however deplorable, is too facile a target, a readymade butt for satire.

action and unreflected complicity as well as shows of strength. This is the scienic condition that Pauline Oliveros addresses in "A Poem Of Change", reprinted in *Cogito* in 1998; here she was posing necessary questions with gentle accordian accompaniment, interrupted at intervals by barking or military sounds presented from the Sected Word Wave. (JC)

Industrial Fist 1983-07 (Present Series 01 CD) is released by he103.org/bpm, a non-profit making media arts organisation especially interested in artists who "explore ideas around transmission as a medium for creative expression". While one ponders what kind of creative expression would involve non-transmission and narrow the eyes of the high atheist, various applied to what is essentially mid-stage-style segue of 80s Industrial Techno groove, Industrial Fist is nonetheless highly accessible.

Ronnie Saito's *Price Varies* lists a dozen parent/Bs sides of electronic music — included here are recordings of Frost 242, Frontline Assembly Ministry, Skinny Puppy and Revolving Cockles among others. These groups were highly divergent — Revolving Cockles revelled in modal aquarius but as "White Cockles" (implied here), a brutalist poem to the 1984 Bhopal disaster indicates, there was a political component to their lunacy. Canada's Skinny Puppy were adamantly anti-technocrats and their music was almost act of sonic empathy for the anguish of workers coerced, tortured with electrodes in labs. Price, however, takes the common elements of these individuals — marital, gear-crunching rhyth-

and a Gethenlike foreboding are – as is typical of musical beat of his own from the cyberpunk and metal beats. Industrial Film makes for an intriguing reminder of the former state of electronic music. Back in the 80s, electronic music was carried with it the suggested threat of imminent totalitarianism and an nihilism, which many still saw the future had in store. Today's laptop culture is a little more relaxed, a little more carefree and at ease with itself and the world by comparison. Moreover, much as in the Terminator movies, Industrial Gothic is an equivalent to Arnold's T-800 model, stocky and initially invincible-seeming but suppressed a more liquid, morphing, upgraded version in subsequent decades. So, the old school remains

something lacking in the new (76). In 2003, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art set up an installation comprising 10 hours of works by French artists and composers working in the electronic music field in the last 50 years. Those ranged from Pierre Schaeffer and Luc Ferrari to pop practitioners like *Video Aventures* (whose *Musiques Pour Géorgies Et Filles* is one of electropop's great lost masterpieces, incidentally).

sample, comprising 12 selections from the exhibition of contemporary French electroacoustic/improvising in at just over two hours. No vital overview; merely a snapshot of the current state of play.

33 RPM is certainly impressive and engagé from Kaspar T. Boulton's "PURPLE," which sounds like a field recording of a gale on the planet Neptune. To the deepest, rummaging improv of Mathieu Chassagne's "MELANGE," while we witness here of Jean-Claude Risset — subtle, affected, distant, near silent — in some ways evokes the fire but vital vigor of the modern French avant garde. But Risset also complets Edgard Varèse's 1958 piece *Poème Électronique*, specifically its clamorous, tolling opening, while Christophe Haefliger's "script/melange" includes what sounds like an explicit reference to the "shot" with which Pierre Henry & Pierre Schaeffer's *Symphonie Pour Un Homme Seul* (1949-50) commences. This inevitably leads to invocative comparisons, as well as a pretentiously nostalgic fixation for musique concrète's various Big Bangs. Whether it's the present day practitioners are still in thrall to the tenors of those beginning, how they're really been taken the ride, whether its beginnings are also its ends. (DS)

Immersing yourself in *Real And Tumble Blues*, a *History Of Slide Guitar* (Jinga JTG02254/54CD2) is like being caught in a storm of heat, pulled by strings but drenched by dirty driving rain. But it hauls so good and you won't hear any serious complaints round here. Compiled and witty if it's needlessly annotated—dates are thin on the ground—by Neil Stevens, its 78 tracks slip and slide evenly over three discs, beginning with the earliest documented slide guitar player Sylvester Weaver's "Guitar Rag", set in a later reworking. Covering the 1920s and '30s, the last half of the box set is the most absorbing in its mix of familiar essential works from the likes of Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Willie Johnson, Charley Patton, Frank Hutchison and Son House with lesser known (to these ears) gems like Kokomo Arnold's take on Giddie Jim's "Piney Woods Blues", one of two sides recorded by Ruth Willis, accompanied by Blind Willie McTell, called "Ephesians Blues", and the fabulously sly b-side yodelling of "Hot-Chen Blues" by Kentucky whey boy C.M.T. Carlisle. Slaven's selections ensure the most every slide mode is represented, from the burrowing slithers of Blind Lemon Jefferson's lonesome blues whinnying of any number of electric sides introduced later in the set. With the coming of electrification comes acceleration and the fast one, and a half disc takes on way too much in terms of space and time, rifling through 30 and more years while



a necessarily bumpy yet exhilarating ride, healing aches through Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins, Elmore James, etc., while taking time out for a delightful answer song, "I Ain't in The Mood" — Donnie Hightower's response to John Lee Hooker's "I'm In The Mood" (absent here — no doubt hiding its boot in shame). The half a dozen UK white blues tracks tacked on the end appear somewhat arbitrary given the essence of the late great American slide player Deane Albee, but this one serious nose job is hardly enough to undo the good work done. 1980.

In his review of *The Turner And Eisenhower Blues: African-American Blues And Gospel Songs 1945-60* (Print Run, this issue), Mark Rydine alludes to songs like "Jesus Hits Like An Atom Bomb" and "Wimpy Ate" (peep-war numbers recorded by a variety of African-American artists which saw topical political content seep into genres like doo-wop and the blues to an unprecedented level). Both are featured on *Like An Atom Bomb: Spirituals From The Cold War Era* (Bizzola BZ002 CD), part of a series of themed collections of period songs recently issued by Bizzola. It's certainly understandable that the rising of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the ensuing period of Cold War would have concentrated post-war musical minds as well as providing a new seam of lyrical metaphor. However, compared with the blood-stained pall of mud and rage which informed, for example, This Heat's *Desert* (1981) during the last great wave of nuclear angst, these boys sound quite chipper. Somehow the almost burlesque stances of doo-wop and Country plunking don't quite evoke Armageddon in the mind's eye. Certainly, there were protest songs such as Billy Hughes' and His Backwoods "Atomic Sermom," which warns that "you'd better stop those scientists/cause they sure gone too far" and chides rocket era nerds with the thought that if God had intended us to visit Mars, he wouldn't have put it so far away. However here, as on "Jesus Hits Like An Atom Bomb," there's almost an underlying relief that the H-bomb will at least have the benefit of dispatching the godless back into the arms of Jesus, as, shit scared, they "start thinking about saving your soul." When They Dragged The Atomic Bomb" is still more enthusiastic about nuclear annihilation, propounding it as a brisk means of enabling "those damned communists" to "mind their maguided egalitarian ways, while Hank Williams warns Stalin not to get too cocky 'cause you know they've found/a system we all know ain't sound.' Just the US give him a nuclear thinking he won't soon forget.

The music is a familiar enough mix of jazz breaks, rag shuffles and funky riffs, occasionally overlaid with pitch vocals and wind flares as on the undeniably self-flauntingly titled 'Not Too Bad' and all is of the highest standard. What's really interesting is that the tracks are universally grabbed from the substantive and sublime history of Polish jazz.

With the Iron Curtain long fallen, it is easy to forget that playing jazz was not just a fiery rebuke of the heart but an intellectual rebellion in a state where the political and the aesthetic were brutally contrasted for abstract totalitarian aims. Literally an underground music played in basements and catacombs in the 1950s, Polish jazz flowered in the political thaw of the 1960s and 70s. The political edge gives a sense coolness and mocking pretense to that jazz. Skipped plunker breaks fire here, among others, Krzysztof Komeda (who scored the music for Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*) and violinist Michael Ubukan, best remembered for his collaborations with Miles Davis.

Samped music often implies an inevitable and anemic postmodern plausibility by reducing everything to the level of source material, regardless of provenance, history or culture. Skipped's audacity may well attract unscrupulous speculators to the red veins of East European jazz, but their own activities are a clear and joyous celebration of their forebears' art.

PATTI SMITH

TRAMPIN'
COLUMBIA ACR9539 CD

BY RYAN PENMAN

"Gangsters with nasal voices were doing to a guitar" – Bruce Chatwin

I'm beginning to wonder if I've got it all wrong – and maybe trying right, all these folk who have 'Name' are only as Patti reborn but as a resplendent masterpiece of ethical protest and renewed artistic purpose that puts everything (and everyone) else to shame. Maybe they hear something I'm just not getting. Because what I hear is a dull, droning, unglamorously smug AOR rock album: no more, no less.

All the five star reviews *Dansper* has received suggest that at the first and proper response to all new Patti work isn't anything so plebian or demeaning as we can more listening pleasure. Rather, the proper response is something more like due obsequious, on our weak moral knees, before the spindly example of wise, strong, noble, mourning-ennobled Patti. Well – to put it politely as I can – you GO on that route. I never signed up for rock 'n' roll as faux Catholicism, certainly not only as one拜olle and unspied as this.

My theory is that we all still (rightly) love Patti so much for her; and are so touchy feely about the death in her recent life, that we can't just come out and say what we really feel. Her last two three albums are about as nudging as musical basket weaving. Maybe like she can still sit it, although the last time I saw her, I was duly rept: for ten minutes, guiltily fidgety after 15 and relaxedly in the pub on the stroke of half an hour it felt more like a seedy homogenous campfire therapy singalong than a hating breathing imperfect gig.

Patti still somehow has the ability to make offstage sain writers dredge up Coenraat Mauk companions with Albert Ayler and John Coltrane

and Miles Davis and Albert Hall Dylan or whoever else Patti is namedropping this month, when just one paired listen to the 1978-sounding *Trampin'* clears up that question in a trice. It makes the last REM album sound like Bobertongue, it's so stick and clichéd and self-satisfied. And boy has her voice ever gotten one-note and nasal and constricted – ahoy steg, happy song or nutty song, it's identical.

As I found myself avoiding the penance of actually listening to *Trampin'*, I compensated by writing thousands and thousands of words, on every topic under that old Rimbard sun (residual Catholicism and her lonely exotic status, Patti's confusing status as *Woman* in Rock posse, all the pretty crushed boys on *Womex*) – until I realised I was in effect trying to do Patti's job for her, trying to make interesting what it just isn't. The is also a pure plodding rock 'n' roll record, overproduced, under玩 and anti-protein and politbôy smug and light/space home. It's also bad Patti Smith: shrill, stoneman, humourless and dry, and worse, eternally predictable. Even her patterned 'feedback' riffs conform to a Miserably audible formula, like, point by numbers: 'Well [pause] there were [pause]... AND [pause] Who [pause] dropped [pause] [PAUSE]... into [pause] the guy's [PAUSE]'.

Think of all those artists who have lately proven that no career is ever definitively over, literally or stylistically, that there is always some new route to stomp – Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Rickie Lee Jones, John Cale I'd have loved to have added Patti to that list but it would be a farce if I tooks like 'Meatballs' (sic) and 'Radio Baghdad' and 'My Balinese Year', she plumbs such levels of add, engorgewy smirkingly self-hilarious self-indulgence it hurts. It also sounds like she hasn't heard a single thing outside her own music for about 25 years. Ultimately, *Trampin'* is so goddamn pisses it's suffocating. It just sits there, wombish and meekly wake up from your sleep, oh doting and wicked people.

In 1975 Robert Christgau, reviewing *Horses*, wrote "Smith (in this manifestation) is a miscreant, not a philosopher". He meant it as a compliment. The trouble is, this opposition now obscures Smith worth to be recovered as a moral exemplar or holy woman come to rescue our vulgar beatified souls – and her fans seem only too happy to indulge her spiritual wet dreams. And they, as an icon, as a person, Petty will be some kind of lottery start for all I know. But as a miscreant... well, as music, *Trampin'* escaped me out and brought me down and altogether ruined my day (my day, my EASTER!) more than anything I can remember since I had to review a John Lennon cassette a few years ago. Well, Petty. We had such a brainiac amour... but no more. No more.

SUCIDE ATTEMPTED: LIVE AT MAX'S KANSAS CITY 1980

SATURDAY FOR THE RECORD INDUSTRY
857978 CD

BY EDWARD POUNCEY

In 1980, eight years after *The Velvet Underground* recorded Live At Max's Kansas City, pioneering electronic rockabilly duo Suicide played the same venue. Now, 24 years later, the results can be heard in all their imperfected glory. What made the VU set such an interesting document

was that the reaction of the audience was indicated just as prominently as the group onstage. This formula is successfully carried forward on Attempted which, despite its primitive sound, creates the illusion that the listener is attending the performance.

Recorded in the year that they released their second album, the crowd that singer Alan Vega and instrumentalist Martin Rev have attracted looks as more enthusiastic than the ugly, indecent mob they famously faced up to in 1978, while supporting Elton Costello in Brussels, an occasion that caused the local gendarmes to stage the rioting audience during Wegé's Vietnam vet song "Punkie Teacher". The "Trampin'" version here is less confrontational, with Rev turning into some Latin American radio station as Vega shanks his lungs out over the mechanised beat. The Dead Boys' Cheesah Chrome duets with Vega on "Touch Me" and a version of "Be My Baby", a little stamping slowdown which adds to the amiable chaos.

But for anyone wanting to hear Suicide at their most dynamic and dangerous, "Ghost Rider", "Rocket USA" and the opening electronic drum solo from Rev make Attempted worth hunting down. Another lesson is the previously unearthened "Cadillac", which takes on the same robotic psyche angst as "Frannie Leacock", only this time set in the back seat of a fat-timed automobile. Complete with sleeve notes by former manager/Red Star Records owner Marty Thau (who executive produced this recording) and a set of previously unpublished photo shots by Andrew Boot, Attempted is a valuable document, capturing the duo's early explosiveness.

JAMES TENNEY

POSTAL PIECES

NEW WORLD 800132 2CD

BY EDWARD POUNCEY

Following the *Hut*/newART release in 2002 of Parts I–IV and last years Selected Works 1962–69 of New World, the long overdue reissue of the music of James Tenney (born in 1934 in New Mexico) continues with this series of 11 works performed on pantomires, or "seemards" as Tenney calls them, performed by the Amsterdam based Bartok Workshop under the direction of trombonist James Fullerton. Eight date from 1971 while the composer was teaching at Dartmouth, though the earliest, *Intermission*, was written in 1965 for percussionist Mac Neuhauas.

While his associates like Alison Knowles and Philip Corner at the time were more associated with the free-thinking spirit of Fluxus, Tenney's approach to experimental composition remained grounded in extensive and in-depth study of acoustics and mathematics. *Beast*, written for Cecili Taylor bassoon, Ned Neillings, explores the phenomenon of slow beats, produced by simultaneously bowing the two lowest strings and gradually detuning the lower. However, its structural plan derives from the venerable Fibonacci sequence. Central to Tenney's concept was the idea of "swell", either in the form of crescendo/decrescendo, most notably in *Haveng*. *Navor Whaton A Rose* for Percussion, or a move towards and away from a consonant sonority. *Swell Piece #2* is dedicated to Pauline Oliveros, while #3 is a homage to La Monte Young, Roar, written for violinist Malcolm Goldstein, is, as Larry Polansky describes it in the sleeve notes, a miniature version of Tenney's celebrated eternal

glassando in the electronic piece *For Ann*, achieved by diversifying glassandi on adjacent strings of the viola. *Cologram* explores the same territory but sounds rather rushed. So do the other solo string works, presumably to fit all 11 *Pestil* Pieces on two CDs, with the exception of *August Harp*, which clocks in at 42 minutes. This exhaustive presentation of all 81 harp pedal combinations of a distant keyboard is similar in concept to Tom Johnson's piano work *Chord Catalog* and, despite the restful timbre of the instrument's sonority and the prevailingly slow tempo, is equally winsome. In stark contrast, *A Rose Is A Rose Is A Rose* is over and done with in just 45 seconds. The most elusive piece of the collection, for *Percussion Persons*, Or... (Night), performed equivalently by Finkerson on timbales and electronics, is dedicated to Harold Budd.

THROBBING GRISTLE

THE TASTE OF TG: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE MUSIC OF THROBBING GRISTLE

MUTE 100014 CD

BY KATH MOLINE

As Throbbing Gristle prepare for their first (and final) concert in more than 20 years this month, no doubt there's a cabal of hardcore radical aesthetes ready to square up to the godfathers of musical extremity, blithely anticipating their failure to give them their money's worth of scary thrills. Me, I'd like who never needed to hide behind the sofa during *Doctor Who*. Perhaps due to the solstic peace God! Industrial tendency that surfaced in the group's wake and which continues, inexplicably, to command an audience, one might be forgiven for assuming that TG's "meatier" was simply to play transgressive judgement. The Taste Of TG proves otherwise. Confrontational tactics have been a staple of the creative arts for centuries, though few performers before Genesis P-Orridge and Cosey Fanni Tutti dedicated themselves quite so diligently to the task of getting under a nation's skin. Their strategy incurred the wrath of a British press who finally labelled them "wrackers of civilisation" for their exploitative/exploitation of taboo imagery. With the Baader-Meinhof crew, provocatively ambiguous sexuality and strange, synthetic songs, which fused surrealism, immediacy and at times almost willful ineptitude, TG were clearly interested in having a radical effect on their audience. The ongoing debate as to the quality of their work, however, should not simply rest on its ability or otherwise to cause outrage. There was an art concerned with the very concept of transgression and low responses to it in mainstream culture impinged on their own rights and freedoms as a countercultural organisation (and by extension the rights of 'less individual') IG made themselves guitars pigs in their own (mis)media experiment.

This new 10 compilation includes selections from both their studio work and their massive live archive, giving a good overview of the group's multifaceted, perhaps even conflicting concerns. Their interest in seeing, hearing, noise is represented here by the nihilistic "We Have You Little Girl", but there's also a live version of "Personae" that sees Gristle addressing the audience with cheerful bonhomie, grooving the original's describing portmanteau imagery in favour of a looser meditation on the song's

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

The People are revolting: a typical People Band performance, late 60s

Up until Julian Cope's gripping exposé in *The Wire* 220, The People Band were lost to the times. Their project of total musical freedom, of blurring the boundaries between audience and performer was apparently so effective that they had managed to duck conventional musical histories altogether.

But the People Band existed in a constant state of flux. In their lifetime, they only made one album, conveniently by Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts and eventually released on the folk label Atlantic in 1970, two years after it was completed. Now 1968 (Emanem 4102 CD) has been remixed, with Emerson having reworked the original recording by inserting a few unreleased tracks from the same Olympic Studio session, throwing a little further light on the group's singular mission.

The People Band's roots were similar to contemporary groups like AMM and The Spacemen's Music Ensemble. Indeed, they began their life as the the Continuum Music Ensemble, before changing their name to avoid confusion. But their allegiance to jazz, or any formal writing strategy, was brief. As the title of pianist Mel Davis, drummer Terry Day and bassist Terry Holman were joined by

procurators like trumpeter Mike Figgis (now the movie director of *Leaving Las Vegas* and *Timecode*, among other films), soprano Georg Khan and drummer Tony Edwards they began to drift further from early anthropic strategies like the use of leaves, sketches and light shows as visual cues. Eventually, they settled on an approach to improvisation that was all about expansion and never looking back, the only reference the pulse of blood and the movement of hands.

It was Watts's admiration for Day's advanced drumming style, playing on a kit augmented by pieces of soap, toilet seats, secondhand toys and wooden crates and using shaved sticks and knitting needles to create subtle gradations in volume, that led the Stones drummer to organise the studio time for 1968. Much of the improvising takes its lead from stampative percussive patterns that imply sub-Saharan rhythms, an approach that's closer to the communal music of The Sun Ra Arkestra or The No-Neck Blues Band than any continental collective. There's little use of heads or even repeating figures, except for the odd guitar phraso or bowed bass chard. It's only during the songs of "Condusions" that the group fatefully fall back on the safety net of earlier working practices under the pressure of studio time.

Here their organisational model is obviously John Coltrane's Ascension, a long free music marathon, with a huge group cacophony followed by a descent into individual solos.

In the sleeve notes, Terry Day describes the recording as being unrepresentative of the live People Band programme, claiming it wasn't as "hot, free, energetic, and chaotic as a gig". At the peak their live shows were anarchic multimedia actions, with interventions by performing arts troupe The People Show and audience members regularly swapping roles with the players onstage. Note that this atmosphere is really apparent here, and at points the presence of four studio bands is palpable. Still, in the absence of much in the way of documentation, this is a vital snapshot of a group that operated on the outermost ring of the music industry on its one and only entry into orbit. Despite the clandestine nature of their mission they set charges that are still sending off aftershocks, with UK groups like The A-Bend and Visuorchester Orchestra waging the same back roads, digging away at the coesives and forwarding the idea of art as a liberating, communal and non-specialist pursuit. (OK)

Giese Branca's greatest contribution to the post-punk avant garde remains theoretical. Branca was one of the first downtown residents to make explicit the common ground shared by minimalist composers and reductive punks, allying rock's monolithic cabaret "ug" with the unyielding nonchalance of clones of experimentalists like Phil Niblock and Christiane Polgarie, and the symphonic bombast of Robert Wiegner and Igor Stravinsky. That said, his music rarely scaled the peaks of contemporary rock operas, groups like Swans, Savage Republic, Mission Of Burma and Sonic Youth, whose much more instinctive grasp of rock dynamics resulted in a music that was unweighted by the kind of selfconscious baggage that Branca inevitably brought to the table. His intuitive feel for soft-second dynamics and elemental use of dissonance far outstrip Branca's more studied application.

Indeed, Branca's appreciation has always seemed more historical than musical, and that's certainly the case with *Lesson No 1* (Ato ACT1000 CD), a release of a clutch of Branca's earliest compositions, featuring 1980's "Lesson No 1 For Electric Guitar" and "Dissonance", and 1982's "Bad Smells". The first two tracks made up Branca's first solo release on Ed Beldam's 99 Records, home of ESG and Liquid Liquid, while "Bad Smells"

originally came out on a split LP with poet John Giorno on Glare's own label.

"Lesson No 1" is scored for harp, guitars, organ, bass and drums and is based on a repeating two note pattern driven through by a Joy Division style bassline and propelled by drumming so steady it sounds like gong balls being dropped into a swimming pool. The hammering on-off guitar riff is undoubtedly intended as a metallic transcription of the dance of Terry Riley's alternating road streams, but here it sounds closer to a new wave rethink of the 12 bar beagle. "Dissonance" is more atmospheric, with wonky bass and pneumatic guitar working spasmy patterns over more slinky percussion, the time augmented by a shodhammer that sounds as cleaving as the polite impact of a cap and soap. And "Bad Smell," at least, is the most interesting. Featuring an expanded line-up of bass, drums and five guitars, including Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo, the group generate a slow roll of fizzgig electronics, over which they dart into sprits of new wave clang. The whole package also comes with a particularly hideous quicktime video featuring Branca conducting his Symphony No 5, although precisely why such elementary dynamics and slight tribal juggling requires this kind of performing monkey is navigator is beyond me. (OK)

To commemorate Michael Nyman's 60th birthday a number of his Peter Greenaway soundtracks have been resurrected, including those for The Draughtsman's Contract and A Zed & Two Naughts. Ignore these terminally annoying exercises in karmatic whooshing while the garden path down which Nyman has been content to tread since the early 80s. Be thanked, instead, for the release of Decay Music (Nurture VME64 CD) produced by Brian Eno and originally issued on his Obscure label.

J-Zero here consists of a sequence of 100 piano chords, originally intended as a soundtrack for an earlier Greenaway film but which the director rejected in his earliest version for being too long. The length of each chord was determined by its decay. Once then overdubbed then further recordings. Despite the Cagean mathematical conceptualism at work here, the musical upshot is strongly moving in its limping, each passing chord almost mourned by the listener as it dies away. The overlap of the asynchronous recordings also means that, as Nyman puts it, "a totally new harmonic world is created", and by happy accident at that, Bell's No 3 applies similar principles using a range of

percussion instruments including Turkish cymbals. The resultant feel of these discreet cycles is more insidious and disquieting. Finally, there's I-TODD (Fader Decay), a sped-up version of the original that feels like a searingo zap to the impatient. (GS)

The fantastically-named compositions — all bar two by the leader — are what you might expect given the ousture title of *Elmer Eskelin's Forms* (Notology 592 CD). "Blalls", in this case, is at least as explanatory, though "Luth" turns out not to be in a Latin groove. Eskelin was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1959 and began playing tenor sax — still his only professional instrument — at age ten. Inspired by a summer residence by The Star Keister Orchestra, he took a degree in music performance, and in 1983 he moved to New York, forming a group with the musicians on this release, bassist Drew Gress and drummer Phil Heynes. This very worthwhile 1990 album was his second as leader, originally on the German label Open Minds. Although grooves dominate, the playing is very open, the leader's tone on tenor hand as teak and incisely strong through the registers. The fragmentary "Vignette" passage, the more innovative formal approach of Eskelin's later trio with Andrea Pirolo and Jim Black. The two jazz standards included are a haunting version of Duke Ellington's beautiful "Reefer Madness" and a ferocious Dizzy Gillespie "Boop."

Originally released on Factory in 1988, Anna Donina's Anna Journe (ILW ILW2397 CD) was the globetrotting chanteuse's debut album. Her cool and somewhat detached vocals sit astride the music's cool and somewhat detached pop grooves. "Rhythm" (sic) is finger-popping and "Caught" is jazzy — it's fun, but the bittersweet synthetic palette screams 1980s low-budget production and reduces its sheen. He sash and swagger start to gain momentum on the single "Summer" (there's an Arthur Baker remix too). "Not Right Now" and "Like That" ignore to the relentless synthpop mementums of the Pet Shop Boys, but misses the latter's honed songwriting. Anna Donina feels like an artist headed for mainstream success, which never arrived. Why? Well, she sounds a little unconvincing on several songs, as though she can't totally believe in the project herself, torn between pop gloss and avant garde torching explorations. Just not rhythmic enough, however, the songs lack real character or any settling pensiveness. (CB) □ Reviewed by Clive Bell, Andy Henshaw, David Hinzen and David Stubbs



themes of abuse and control. This grey, noxious mark of "Zyklon B Zombie" references the gas chambers by sounding like it was recorded in one. Chris Carter's programming on "Distant Dreams" and "Hot On The Heels of Love", meanwhile, has a phony weightiness that still seduces two decades on. Disapproving is lack of selectors from 1980's Heathen Earth, whose pseudo-shameless high magic improvisations prefigured the practices that Steely Dan, Christopher and P-Orridge later explored as Psychic TV. Consolation is offered by the perky punk parody "Something Came Over Me" and the Martin Denny-inspired "Exotic Functions", while both "United" and "Dead On Arrival" inspired a generation of avant-dancefloor adventures.

The most notorious piece, "Hannibular Lady", a setting of a letter detailing the daily care of a burns victim, is extraordinarily unsettling, with its punning, whining synths and measured, dispassionate drum pulse. But just because it's shocking does not make it infantile or offensive. There is something tender, touching even, about Gern's delivery, which is cut up, falsetto-style so that his horrific details are hinted at rather than coldly announced, as they might be in a news story. Like many other pieces on the album, it's a powerful display of the mysterious ability of sound to suggest and disturb.

JONNY TRUNK THE INSIDE OUTSIDE

TRUNK 010082 CD
BY KEN HOLLINGS

It's a little surprising to discover that the man responsible for putting out the soundtrack to such esoteric movie releases as *Psychoanalysis*, *The Wicker Man* and *Cool Throat* should be so modest about blowing his own, um, trumpet in public. The Inside Outside, a beguiling selection of tracks recorded at home for his own listening pleasure, is all about revealing what was once extremely private: "learning it for the first time," he explains in his unassuming sleeve notes, "is a little like exposing myself outside," before going on to quote the painter Franz Klein regarding trust: "confidence with the capacity to be embarrassed."

Such preparatory difference is misplaced. Trunk's sterling efforts in archiving, preserving

and disseminating a remarkable range of recordings, from the original music for the kids' TV series *The Chargers* to Basil Rathbone with Evan Parker, stems from a personal commitment clearly discernible in his own work. "Sister Woo", the only track to have been available previously as a limited edition 7", before turning up on the last add-on To A Album, stands along purposefully, establishing a standard for brevity and underscoredness to which subsequent tracks adhere. "The Work" is a short, heartfelt tribute to Herbert Chappell, whose work will be very familiar to anyone with a fond memory of the closing moments from George A. Romero's 1973 zombie flick *Dawn Of The Dead*. "Dead In A Dream" and "The Woods" both sound extracts from a Disney cartoon someone decided was too scary for its intended kids' audience, while "The Hunt", evoking root-tressed images of Frank's past as a pomo-photographer, wouldn't be out of place in a piece of soft-focus excess like the sample from Robert Meltin's "Adapt" that Trunk threads through the sample melody of "Zeus"; this collection will have, intrigue and amuse for a long time to come.

FRANCK VIGROUX

LILAS TRISTE
ARTAUD CHORDS/01001 CD
BY BRAHM MORION

Vigroux is a purveyor for the fretless guitar. Based in Greece, he organizes the peripatetic Nuit Et La Feteuse festival and used to lead The Feelies. Musician Octet. Past associations include Marc Ducret and David Faziozynski, who guests here on "Les Arpenteurs". Apart from him, harpist/vocalist Hélène Breschand and vocalists Fabrice Andriou and Cécile Riven, all sounds are produced by Vigroux on guitar and laptop. They range from swooping glissos and shimmering harmonics that are oddly reminiscent of guitarist Ray Russell's more ambitious experiments, to tugs, scrap iron crunches that are more like Chet Baker's dead-lazy falsetto effects in his one man band days.

Muted narratives and distressed calls give parts of "Lilas Triste" the character of Godspeed You! Black Emperor, though Vigroux's work is less obviously elevated in origin and less subversive in its intent. When he employs relatively orthodox

picking, as on "Sous Mon Ombre", the effect is soaring. Other passages are as fragmentary as can be from a move soundtrack and might be nothing more than studio workouts manipulated after the fact. We certainly talk any organic snarl. When Cécile Riven walks in on singer "Lettre A Louis", there is a strong similarity to avert, gentle vocal writing of the 1960s and 70s – at this distance an infatuating comparison. Too many composers hearing is too many unpraising directions, then. This isn't to say Vigroux is an uninteresting musician. Elsewhere, his guitar duels with Scottie's Ned Everett are worth hearing but this is too hazy to hot over.

BUGGE WESSELTÖFT

JAZZLAND 9661612B CD
BY BRAHM MORION

Music Davis deserved "Directions in music", Norway's Bugge Wesseltoft promises a "New conception of jazz", without ever clarifying where the jazz is, what's new about it and whether the "conception" has yet germinated and started to move in the womb. Several albums down the track, the pianist is still oscillating between beavering album soundscapes and a brisk Nordic version of Davis's jazz funk, beginning so on "De Ye", where the saxophonist (presumably guest Joshua Redman) does Henry Garrett's slyries in what the New York Times called "the best thing here by some distance". Wesseltoft is credited not with piano but with "percino sounds" and even when the title track promises "Rhythms", what you get is collage and pinballing out of recognition. There are moments when the most obvious point of comparison is with "The Necks'" minimalist theses, slowly morphing ostinati couched in an approximation of jazz tonality but handled without swing and with no obvious harmonic progression. The sputtering on "Pens" (presumably the title Vidar Johansen is closer to Jan Garbarek, suddenly focused and folious in ideas). Elsewhere there are touches of brass, accented bass, percussion and programming, and fugitive vocals from Olavur Höysell and Oyvind Groven Myrthen. It's the most compelling Wesseltoft date so far, not least because it's more varied than its predecessors.

CHRISTIAN WOLFF FOR TWO PIANOS... AND THREE

CONTENT 50450105 2XCD
BY BRIAN MARLEY

One of the reasons why Christian Wolff's music stands out is because of its sheer unforced oddity. Although in many respects it behaves much as other music does, initial acquaintances throw it slightly off-balance and keep it there. Even his indeterminate compositions are distinctively his own. Because of the musical relationships he cultivates between the performers – the kinds of cues they're asked to respond to, the acceptance of contradiction that informs the music making when difficulties are encountered – his pieces have a unique character.

On this generously laid, beautifully released set for two pianists, with Wolff himself as an occasional third player, he often sets out to hammer the smoother execution of the music making. In *Oust* (1960), the performers can't avoid getting in each other's way, and this awkwardness is an intended feature of the music. Most of the other pieces are less stressful to perform, though few are without difficulty. Those from the first decade of Wolff as composer are the *One For Piano 1, Sonata* (for three pianos, with slight preparations), and *Two For Piano 1*, of which there are three versions, each half the length of the previous one. The *duos* and *Duet* can also be found in a free *Matchless* set by John Tilbury, Wolff and Eddie Privat. Here, on *Content*, Mats Persson and Kithine Scholz are the pianists.

Among the premières are *70 (And More)* (for Alvin (2001), the *Venations* (Extracts) on The German Whistle Variations of Ryd (1972), and four valuable new additions to his ongoing series of *Exercises*. The compositions likely to make a strong impression on new listeners are *Two Panels* (1993–94), an expansive set of variations on the song "Poor Mayfayling Stranger" which predicts the American Revolution, and the two-part *Brawerman Music* (1978). Best here, however, is the strange and ambiguous *Sheedup* (1970), with its swollen scalar threads and deliberately uncoordinated vision playing. No previous recording has captured its qualities as well as Persson and Scholz do here. □

Label Lore

No: 092
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Roster Includes

Experiments, Born Heller, Czarny & Ben, Dragones, 1976, Thee White Stripes, Harry J. Toot, Dogface, Henry Cow, Rova, Don Cherry Band, Israel, Alan Watts, Josephine Foster, Ramon Sender, Timothy Leary, Alain Ginsberg..., On Met Utr (Location Sound Series), Keith Fullerton Whitman, All, Ephemeral, Rehearsal, Reynolds, Christopher DeLaurenti, Minnows

Brief History

Founded 2000-01, on one side of Chicago, where the rent was too high and the heat was never high enough. Nowadays, we're based on the north side. The first site signalled a

slightly spurious undertaking with the release of Christof Migone's oddly wonderful *Crackers* – based entirely around the cracking of joints and bones. Things only looked up from there since those early beginnings, the label has grown a great deal.

Statement of intent

I've always been interested in archival material. There's something haunting about coming across something done 30, 40, 50 years ago that not only seems totally insignificant, but also sounds fresh. But one of the things that I've always wanted to do is to tagteam a present master of the old and the new. Locust has allowed this to happen. Cross-pollination of different "species" of music and sound is another theme that drives what we do. Another key interest has been the development of different voices, built around ideas or concepts (Met Life and Object). I feel like I'm looking for a through line in a fairly melancholy story. Sometimes the result will be obvious, sometimes it will be totally emerging.

Other activities

As well as the KMET label, I'm developing two new sublabels. The first is Potter's Field, the Appalachian roots label will kick off with a set of recordings from the 1920s. Local legends and some contemporary of the old times of Old Mountain. The other is an international music label called Latitude, including a collection of ESP recordings, Richard Alderson's *monosonic* in Chappaqua, shamanic recordings by anthropologist Mick Taussig, the reissue of the soundtrack to Cormel White's *The Naked Prey*.

Future plans

Early 00s Remastered Senator series, Moondog box set (autumn), a series by the late poet/activated Kenneth Patchen, new CDs by No 91, Czarny & Ben, follow-up to the *Wedged Guitar* anthology with Jack Rosin, Sir Ichard Bishop, Tezzi Aykyna, Statton Basha Jungman, etc. Last but not least, we'll be diving headfirst into Henry Flynt's c.1970s Notably sessions. Info & manifest: LocustMusic.com

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

ANGELBLOOD

LABA MINORIA

PRINTED MATTER INC/29918A CD

After recording two albums with Japanese independent label Captain Folk, avant metal outfit Angelblood unleashed their deadliest recorded threat yet. Comprising vocalists Lutz Beugelsdijk (who Lutz Beugels) and Rita Ackermann (who Rita Ackermann), together with drummer David Nass (aka Hawk) from No Neck Blues Band, bass player Brian DeGroff and Swedish guitarist Anders Nilsson (aka Ikonoklast), the group set up their amplifiers in a desolate forest and prepare to summon up some serious church burning rock 'n' roll. A cross between Buzzard and The Shaggs, Angelblood are delirious and desolate in their approach, allowing piping holes of hellish guitar grind to open up unexpectedly only to be followed by the astute snarling of Darque and Cydrome before the supporting sonic wound is exposed again.

APPLECRAFT THE HAPPIEST MAN ALIVE

OCHRE ORCHARD CD

The second album from Applecraft (a trio made up of ex-Spiritualized band members Don Manden and Jenny Matlock, together with former Julian Cope guitarist Mike Mooney) is an unexpected treat. It blurs whimsical folk rock furnishings together with refined 60s UK psych pop to produce a magical hybrid that shifts from the great outdoors free of their drivel. The Shining City On The Hill to their take on outer space. The space rock tradition of early Pink Floyd and "Silver Machine," aka Hawkwind is evoked here, together with the more earthbound回响 folk groups like The English Kaleidoscope and July. The real thrill here is Mooney's guitar, hurtling dramatically through Manden's electric reverb storm of synthesized sound.

BIZARROS CAN'T FIGHT YOUR WAY UP TOWN FROM HERE

CLOWN CITY CD

Nick Nichols' Clown label was instrumental in promoting many of the groups who emerged from Akron, Ohio during the late '70s. Everybody's heard of Devo, but only Come introduced The Waterboys, Tim Healy and Nichols' own outfit. The Bizarios to the world, and for that he deserves to be saluted. Indeed, the return of Come and the Bizarios is a real treat for all those who can remember them the first time round. Even so, epic performances notwithstanding, most newcomers will hear only a set of staid Valley Underground paced, punk rock reiterations from one of Rubber City's finest. "Return The Elgin Marbles," they demand on the back of the cover, which shows just how far they are ready to push their interest in classic rock.

BRIGHTBLACK ALA CALITUCKY

GALARIA GDR20 CD

Fans of Will Oldham and all his works are directed towards this collection of slow-motion alternative folk and Country croons from Nathan

Shineyarm's Brightblack quartet. As well as being comrades of Oldham, the group have also roped in his brother Paul to co-produce and play bass. Brightblack can be tied to the same tree as Dave Pape's Page M, the Palace Brothers, et al, but the distant, dreamlike quality in their playing will instantly appeal to those who enjoy hearing long, drawn out piano arpeggios with the occasional delirious flourish of pedal steel guitar (courtesy of Glenn Thompson). Although hardly revolutionary in its scope — that was never the intention — the addition of chouring Kentucky falsettos at the end of several songs does add a tinge of natural found sound to the proceedings.

FAUN FABLES

FAMILY ALBUM

DIGD CITY DC008 CD

Singer/songwriter Dawn McCarthy is the impetus behind Faun Fables, a mostly one woman unit who is joined by Nils Frydal of Sleepytime Gorilla Museum and various members of her family. The main instrument here, though, is McCarthy's astonishing voice which she uses to build up layers of fantastic imagery pulled from the gigantic storybook inside her head. Echoes of The Incredible String Band and even The Goat Society are present, but the wolf haunted world that Faun Fables invites you to explore has been solely invented by McCarthy. Family Album is a magical collection of songs that transports the listener into another dimension, where the only thing you need to pack is your imagination.

KAITO

BAND RED

BLAST FEAT ABPI0010 CO

Newly/Brighton based rock quartet Kaito follow up their brassy titled Kaito EP with a full-on demonstration of their capabilities. Band Red suggests that they have reached milestone and anybody encountering their post-punk roots would be advised to stand well back. As it turns out, there is really nothing here to worry about, with the usual spiced guitar and drums and bass rumble punctuating Kaito's impassive Bow Wow Wow-style vocal whooping. Kaito still sound as though they are hooked up to the same old No Wave generator that powers Yeah Yeah Yeahs, but when they slow down, the invisible presence of such former Blast Fest luminary as Ut Is A Band Of Suspects can be heard resonating in the shadows. And if "Driving Manual Auto" isn't a smash, then there really is no pop justice.

JACK SPAAR

JACK SPAAR

4260044000001001300 CD

Rather than rapelling and scratching from the mysterious Jack Sparrow who, in the wake of *Elizabethan* and the rest of the Anticon posse, seems perfectly in tune with the new strain of weirdness that has miserably stuck up the Hip-Hop nation, Jack Sparer is less intriguing than Deconon and company, but their rich for experimentation is acute enough to keep you listening as they drag you by the hair through

their nightmare world of goats, dinosaurs and surreal gangbangin'. There's even a song here alluding to American Mustyle guru Martha Stewart in the title, whose racist tilt-fair grace the group celebrate with a tongue tangled Old School rant crudely held together with somewhat outdated Public Enemy pasturing, Keith Rowe-style radio dithering, a smothering Bad Detective voice samples and an asthmatic Pelequeque melodies. Aggressive but impressive.

JOANNA NEWSOM

THE MILK-EYED MENDER

DIGD CITY DC008 CD

After her two self-released CDs (I Am And Glue and Walnut Whales) Californian avant folk singer/songwriter and harpist Joanna Newsom finally makes her Drag City debut with a disc that will hopefully introduce her astoundingly simple yet moving music to a wider audience. The surprisingly childlike quality of her vocal and harp strumming marks a much deeper power, one that immediately surfaces in these beautifully constructed and performed songs. With tracks like "The Book Of Rich-Do" and "Clara, Clara, Cookie," Newsom's work fits in snugly alongside that of Will Oldham and Devendra Banhart (both of whom she has supported in concert) and, like them, her creative drive is equally impossible to ignore. What's more, she's an admirer of American folk pioneer and composer, the late Ruth Crawford Seeger, whose spirit can be heard meowing through the record. Newsom's heartfelt and powerful contribution to the folk scene can only enrich it.

TO ROCOCO ROT

HOTEL MORGEN

DOMINO WIG020 CD

This fifth album from this Berlin-based trio of electro-rockers is a further extension on the sound that the group have developed since their formation in 1998. To Rococo Rot effortlessly absorb the spirit of such German electronic units as Neu!, Dan and Cluster. Once fully digested, they release it like one form of musical gas. Halei Miyogen is pleasantly ear friendly and leaves no unpleasant odour or lingering aftertaste. This, however, is not my problem. As TRR continue to pull out their innocent sounding vapour trail from your speaker system, the hunger to hear something other than carefully spliced rhythm tracks begins to grow.

Fans of Tocotronic, Tram and Stereolab, though, will find much here to shuffle around the room in the dark to.

TV ON THE RADIO

DESPERATE YOUTH, BLOOD

THIRSTY BABES

TOUCH AND GO TD0354 CD

After last year's acclaimed Young Lions EP from this Brooklyn-based art rock quartet comes a fresh, nine song collection that will only bolster their already rising reputation. Fronted by the vocalistic Tunde Adebimpe with guitarists David Andrew Strick and Iggy Volsino, drummer Jalal

Bunton and bass player Gerald Smith, TV On The Radio skilfully blend their own determined style with that of Gil Scott-Heron and The Yeah Yeah Yeahs to produce a noisy, No Wave-tinged free jazz rock that steadily pulses, gyrates and hums its groove into your soul. Elsewhere African flutes chime beside laconic big band brass ensembles, while doo-wop harmonies are delicately draped around strains of urban guitars to produce an exciting record crawling with new ideas, while driving in a different direction with its foot on the gas.

12TWELVE

SUPERSTIMO

BOA 600000222 CD

Blowing in from Chicago comes this awfully named electro/jazz/rock quartet whose distinctive style is bolstered by the sensitive production skills of Steve Albini, a man who rarely knows a good thing when he hears it. 12Twelve have so many ideas on the back burner that it's a joy to hear what they've set up in their way through a gamut of musical genres, including Koolaid, Ambient, Displacement funk, Jai-Jai scratch and that repeated noise effect you get when the CD starts. Something for all tastes indeed.

WILCO

A GHOST IS BORN

NONESUCH PR201360 CD

This latest batch of quirky songs by Wilco, featuring Jim O'Rourke at the controls, entries into action with "At Least That's What You Said", a naive, acoustically charged song that restores their long abandoned *It's Your Country*. Half way through, however, it unexpectedly explodes into chiming by Greenleaf Nel Yung & Cosy House electric guitar gymnastics. A subtle rash of rock 'n' roll shivers that instantly focus the back of your skull and makes you hunger for more. A similar tactic bleeds through the rest of the album, with Leroy Bach's guitar cocked like a hair triggered saw-off shotgun, while Jeff Tweedy's expertly confused vocal has sympathetic strains of Kurt Cobain winding through it.

WOLF EYES/SMEGMA

THE BEAST

DE 8710 PROMO CD

The slimming chapter of electro lycanthropes Wolf Eyes born Michigan and former LAFMS house band Smegma is an inspired collaboration. Smegma's previous recording studio tag team romps have included both Wild Man Fischer and Mezzrow, but in Wolf Eyes they have found a group truly sympathetic to their mutated musical ideals. Indeed, at times it is almost impossible to tell which group is playing as they seamlessly link into a barrage of experimental hoots and honks, further brusied by the occasional vocal bluster of cut white and former Blue Oyster Cult, Jessup Richard Meltzer (who joined Smegma in the late '90s). The resulting tape and instrumental destruction captured here demonstrates that this was one battle of the bands where both sides were equally matched. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

DB

ASPERN

BACKGROUND BG009 12"

LUMP

POLKA PARADOX

KARLSTAD KU01 12"

The cover art's a dead ringer for Kampkärt's Speicher series, double headed eagle and all, but the latest release from Andy Vans' Background label doesn't sound anything like Speicher's bombastic proto-Trance and blunted stuff. Instead, it's — Vienna's Daniel Bembenig — approaches House through suggestion alone, building a sprightly beat out of drum samples and hissing percussive ticks. Over this he scatters wispy bits of keyboard, woodwind and less recognizable samples. The result is a chugging, nonchalance pattern that seems to catch all manner of reflected light in ever changing ways as it builds. His latest release as Lump (not to be confused with the Mental Groove artist of the same name) is even more dynamic taking inspiration from Brinkmann's etiolated club tracks, Jon Jelinek's dust, crusting and Deadbeats' dubby dron. Bembenig builds two long, undulating grooves out of a steady kick drum, emits flurries of static and flickering pads. Bembenig's approach recalls any number of minimalists, from Aukufen to Matthew Herbert, but the parbass decay of his tunes is refreshing. The mastering seems unusually democratic — every sample has its time in the spotlight, and while the kick drum heads, it seems ready to be tapped at any moment.

MIA

SCHWARZWEISS

BUB-BUBB BUBB ZAP!

Techno has far more moods and modes than even its fans give it credit for. One of the most moving of late has been the supplicating melancholicism of artists like MIA, aka Michaels Grönbech, who along with Felix Brinkmann runs Cologne's Sub Stile Records. This is Grönbech's first album, after singles for Sub Stile and Insamyk. It's not as yet as moving as her guitar and vocals could seem; recall of the Modemütz's "Protest Song" from last year. In fact, much of this sweetness and light of that tune finds its opposite in the grinding Acid sequences of tracks like "Dark Deeds". But there's a plaintive, plangent thread that runs through much of the album, recalling the wide eyed elation of Seana Funke and Elen Atiles. For music as cold, it's weirdly sexy but erotic elements are not to be found in the obvious places (beatty vocals, exaggerated swells). Rather they emerge from the languageless creaking of an Acid baseline as it loses its edge, or the gentle slap of a powdered snare as it's smacked in time with a silver plate hi-hat.

OSBORNE

ABOUT READY TO JAK RMX

RPECTRUM SP014 12"

That Todd Osborne is a trickster As

Soundmender he cops a title from Remake and reinvents his protégé's Jungle mix, mixed with just enough of Squearpusher to keep the demon

intro at bay. As Osborne he added a dropped 'e' and turned out "Soul Ready To Jak", a Grimey jack bass grimly determined to catapult itself a decade back in time. On this set of remakes, Anthony "Shaka" Shanks stays true to its source, albeit beefed up with a spiffier bass and snare he might have borrowed from H.E. Matthew Dear lends his signature lush to his version, undercutting placed, disintegrating chords with sluggish new stabs. Hieroglyphic Being's synth-smeared mix sounds steeped in New Order's Movement, and almost as corroded as those master tapes must be by now. Osborne himself tenses up with "Dear for a static", Andy mix that shivers in place, strafed by arpeggios, like a forlorn diabolo lost on some cold plateau of his mind.

PANTHU DU PRINCE
DIAMOND DAZE

DIAL CALLIGA 12"

The "Techno" sounds of artist like Four Tet and Manelba have until now largely gritted feathered melodies and chalk dulcified samples onto warthored breakbeats built with Panthu Du Prince's debut album on Hamburg's Dial Records, Panthu loses them with their natural home in the four-poster canopy bed when Techno resp up between borders. The sensitive, occasionally soporific work of Panthu Du Prince — aka Hendrik Weber, who records as GithenH and Pantuh, as well as playing bass for Stelle — results that of another Ostl artist, Lawrence. But where Lawrence's organic materials have been sanded and painted with a solid, metallic sheen, Weber makes the barns and brats of his source material stand out like chequered imperfections. Bell tones shimmer dissociatively in the shade of blunted pianos, and playing cards with peeling lettering part in the spokes of rattled bicycle wheels. Even on a track like "Selin Dross", driven by an aggro, staccato baseline that wouldn't be out of place on a Bautista! 12", sheets of steady dance recalling Thomas Kälber's darkest architectures resettle from afar. Distance is the central conceit — the album plays like a raw broadcast on a boombox from the centre of one of Richard Serra's enormous, oversized spirals.

PARAONE
BEAT DOWN

EXHIBITION E01 12"

Parawow? — Full Fledged Weish's coming sooner than you think? — and as press release is right, so we left with what's in the groove, for deliciously seedy beats in search of an augur, which they find only once, on "Beat Down", where it's TIC, TIC and Organic La Xocologua spit bivel, bilingual rhymes over a pankey rhythm that can't decide where to put the hot potato downbeat. The seething cante and bangoo bleep are straight out of classic Aphex, and the percussion's carved out of beatbox samples but something relentless elevates this, far above however many years we've endured of stutter-hop tracks that won't get off the snooze button. This also may be the first nontrivial Hopstep single to have a benefit, four-to-the-floor, goddamn stomping Techno track

on the B-side. "Turtle Trouble" is but one masterizing job away from being Kampkärt worthy. Its cheerful, hyperactive inaudience makes me wonder if Reker and Rex the Dog occasionally babysit its makes, teaching them all kinds of veiled tricks to play with mousetraps and electrical sockets.

TAMION 12 INCH

LET'S SUFFER

ERISUS AUDIO PROMO CD

Splendid Innovator Lele Olafsiay have a particular trick for treating her voice like Silly Putty but her vocaloids look particularly amorphous compared to the broadcasting start work of B. Kury, the singer of Detroit's Teneum 12. Against dark, spacious vamps of clanging piano and Industrial noise, Kerr channels Skooupe to a degree that's almost uncanny (like, weren't Gon singles already kinda like that), while her backup players' strident bass and guitar spasms have clearly been dredged from collections stuck with that feeling that Teneum 12 had, despite their mechanical repro name, manage to hold retain and bring up and come with a sound that sounds undeniably live, direct, and above all, present.

SUPERPITCHER
HERE COMES LOVE

KOMMEN KOMMEN CD

This is where it (almost) all comes together. In six years, Kampkärt has gone from a boom-beck, one tick pacy to one of the more unpredictable horses in the ring, by turns graceful, showy, poly, and warlike. Superpitcher (Adler/Schäfer) has gathered together almost all the strains of Kampkärt's multiple personality (saw, saw, notably for the super-powered wallops of Mayer, Voigt and Späth's most lethal mode) into a rich, intimate collection of songs held together by a delicate interplay of opposing forces.

Superpitcher's singles and remixes have always felt almost literally magnetic, owing to the frequent use of backmasked guitars and a spine-embedding internal gravity. Here he extends that sensibility to pop songs, layering Schäffel stompers, and even on oddball cover of the cult classic "Fever". "Lovers Rock", "People" and "Happiness" show Superpitcher in pure singles form, all grand, intro key changes, laydog shuffles, and splashdown snarls. But even the dooms here, like the Doors-in-dub organ oomph of "Love Me Forever", feel like long lost B-sides out of a mythic back catalogue.

TOVAR
CUMBIA QUEENS EP

NORNAL BEAT NBB01 12"

House music without a Latin element is about as unthinkable as rock without a basskick but that hasn't stopped hundreds, if not thousands of producers from fetishising every last tap of the clave. To Mexican artists, like Tover (Rivera Mirand) of Guadalajara's Noval Beat label, the question of "Latin House" should presumably be synonymous, but toov's "Cumbia Queens" still sounds like a peach: it's a collage of rolling congas, the beatbox seep and ham fills reciting 50s mambo (another genre that

happily blurred the line between essence and artifice). Its collage approach sounds offputtingly calculated but there's a nice bit as Acid House pingpongs like the twist by the arm and lead it down another nostalgic pass. Oddly, Akten's mix sounds fresher, even though his pastiche is even more over the top, piling on the tropes until the song is ready to collapse like an overburdened burn.

VARIOUS
BIS NEUNZEHN

AREAL ARTFALES CD

Cologne's young Areal imprint goes under the slogan of "Advanced Tech-Electronic Minimalism" but the label does itself a disservice with the tagline. Areal's second mixed CD, which draws from the label's singles 11 through 19, proves that its artists advanced house music has cast off the trappings of conventional Minimal techno. Instead, gauzy analogues tones bleed with digital distortion-buffered drums cast off like ambient vacuums, and lurching grooves caught midway between the floor-to-the-floor and Schmitt swell into full-bore songform. Areal's uniterrupted projects state their dual roles — Konfekt and Unkle/Redz what, the Proletian Lab's unrigged rhythmic experimenters, Matope and Besterholz' boot-cut at dancefloors with jumper cables that spit sparks. But Adi is the true star of the bunch. Her resonant, yearning electro-Techno, flecked with vocals reading Luunja's Deep House excursions, are some of the saddest anthems ever set to a slinky Techno stamp. A bawling girl once embraced Adi, her cheeks wet with tears, after I played Adi's "Blindhouse" at a party. I wanted to say, "It's just the drugs, honey, you'll be OK" but hearing Adi's tunes here, in sober solitude, they're almost as devastating.

THE WBS
BABY'S ON FIRE

ROAD TRADE RTR04 12"

Superpitcher's "Baby's On Fire" was one of the cheekiest things ever to appear on Kampkärt. His cover of the Eric song effected a double manoeuvre that elucidated the glam influence on Kampkärt's cosmic chug even as it underscored the proto-Techno edge of the original. Now, an artist recording as the WBS (rumoured to be Westbam, though I can't confirm this) has versioned Superpitcher's version, gutting the gossamer innards of the Kampkärt cover and replacing them with chunky rock 'n' roll piano chords that sound as much like Roxy Music as Eric. It may be a calculated move, designed to resonate with the current vagary for "dance rock", but even so, I'll happily count myself a heller to the slaughter, because The WBS' knife shines so seductively. The track opens with Superpitcher's strangely accented vocals edging above a stripped down rhythm section, with the snare drum bashing cut like a link in The Jesus and Mary Chain. Then, midway through, Countiford guitar and piano make a build to a blangled climax before track out in a leaky funkie of handclaps. The beat mostly carries off a novelty cover ever. □

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

BADAWI

CLOONES & FALSE PROPHETS RUMRUSSER CD

On first take Badawi could be mistaken for a coffee-table book of Muzunguwan, with his fusion of club and Middle Eastern beats.

However, with his fifth album, *Raz Mesiah*, he has forged his own identity. *Cloones & False Prophets* clearly bears the marks of his involvement with New York City's downtown experimental and improvisational set, mainly based around Tonic clubs, with the explosive guitar lines of Marc Ribot winding sinuously around the rhythms and John Zorn collaborator Doug Wieselman contributing clatter.

At once tough and meditative, Badawi reclaims 'ba'na' from all those lame House DJs. With Asian dub foundations and others searching Monrovia and Algiers for newly emerged beats, still more challenging tracks cannot be far away.

KEN BOOTH/EU ROY/ DENNIS ALCAPONE/ AUGUSTUS PABLO/ZAP POW OLD FASHIONED WAY/ DYNAMIC FASHION WAY/ FAT BABY/BROKEN CONTRACT TRICORN TR-TEB14 10"

Two sides are presented here of that most innovative of Jamaican producers, Keith Hudson. Ken Booth's "Old Fashioned Way" is one of those anastaploously useful sounds usually only found, and rarely at that, in the neglected corners of reggae – other immediate examples being *The Abyssinians*' Garage-esque "This Land Is For Everyone" and Freddie McGregor's delayed celebration for Channel One, "Dense This Ya Festival". And Hudson could version like the best of them with DJ takes by U Roy and Alcapone which caught them both at the height of their skills.

The mixed charges on the flip, with another exposure for the one-time rarity "Fat Baby", a Pablo melodic version of Big Youth's epochal "590 Skank" and an equally welcome outing for leading session crew Zap Pow Strangle, however, that the opportunity was not taken to run four or five versions of "590" on the piece, linking up the original with its club, which is to be found on Hudson's Pick A Dub album on the Blood & Fire label.

COUNT OSSIE

REMEMBERING COUNT OSSIE – A RASTA 'REGGAE' LEGEND MOONSCAPE INTERNATIONAL HIBBERT CD

As the assembled ragged brass section of Count Ossie begins to swing and shuffle, this could be a 1950s session from Jay McShann, Illinois Jacquet or any other US R&B outfit. But then the deep bass drum of The Wailers pulses in, the sound becomes hopped and the studio and cloudy Producer Harry Mudie has documented many of the foundation drummer's earliest sessions from the 50s and 60s, bolstering the claim that, the legendary Dowdall "Count Ossie" Williams was responsible for the infusion of African drumming and chanting into reggae that first came to fruition in the work of Ras Michael And The Sons

of Negus and then African Head Charge.

The tunes here consist of vocal, drum and brass that simultaneously echo Muzunguwan, New Orleans and West Africa. It's difficult, though, to understand the reasoning behind Mudie's decision to add overdubs to some tracks, which only detracts from their purity and purpose, especially on the chanted "Babylon Gone". The CD version contains five extra tracks including a remix of "Sun Fever".

FUTURE PIGEON GOLDEN STATE OF DUB SHARPCORCORDS SWEDEN CD

This 2001 album from LHM Future Pigeon is worth seeking out as an early clue to their percussive direction. Ray Condyne, Lou Ween, Brandon Iron and Al have been known to support Mike Oldfield and have been mixed by Sosinski down at the city's Dub Club. This was recorded in 1995 through 1999, and the group have doubtless moved on by now, but there's enough full-fledged references here to qualify them as dub mavericks.

"Gurungan" boasts a pre-Monroe Western guitar style à la Ventures, with other titles like "Fall Di The House Of Dub" and "Hell Of The Mountain Dub" wisely avoiding vacuity and steering clear of that monkey on the back of most American groups dabbling in Jamaican music – ska.

IRATION STEPPERS DUBS FROM THE HIGHER REGIONZ DUBHEAD DHD-0020 CD/SLP

When known as Watch, Iration Steppers once threatened to get in among the dance mainstream, but over the past few years they have only been in evidence in sound system appearances and the odd single, so the release of this album is well overdue for one of the UK's premier dub acts.

The set features all previously unreleased tracks, minus those on the discloses, plus the best of their singles from the past two years, some in new versions. The CD format offers in that it comes intoz inserted between each track, derived mainly from live Iration gigs, lending a continuous 'live' feel. There are cuttings for the voices of Ross stonewall Terrie Stolin as well as Max Iration himself, while the CD version includes the vocal version of "Locks" from the recent Dubhead 10" EP.

KLIG ZERO GRAVITY/BLACK EYE EDDICTIVE ED-0084 7"

Swedish artist Anders Bengtzen met studio engineer Zak Phillips at a Jah Shaka gig in 1995 and they colluded to make future dub music. These two suss out date from 2001 and are a result of combining heads on dub mixing with subsequent digital processing. Consequently there's a warm, contemporary acoustic feeling at play here that could be described as English-style – think of Lee Bewick's Dig Dub as a tangential forerunner and we can begin to conceive of an English

school of 'nu-warm dub'. The lowercase kig are currently working with guitarist Tim Shields on new music that in a preemptive strike is forecast to be 'nothing like Palis'.

HARRY MUDIE HARRY MUDIE MEETS KING TUBBY IN DUB CONFERENCE VOLUME 1 MOONSCAPE HIBBERT CD/UP

As surely as eight follow days there is an expectation that the word "heavyweight" must also follow the word dub as an indicator of the music's potential to alter the operations of both mind and body.

This notion is alien to the world of Harry Mudie, a producer whose work always inclined towards the tenuous, restressed and elusive, even when visiting R&B-style workhorses. There is a whole stack of releases newly released out of Honky HQ in Florida, both vinyl and CD, including a set of three club albums where he put tubas to work on some of his classic rhythms from 1976 through 1978 – "Rom", "Offitez", "Heart Don't Stop" and "Love Without Feeling".

It's this last one – a Hastings tune – that the dubmaster converts into one of his most

accomplished creations, "Dub With A Difference", where a string quartet is dashed into the studio

and dubbed up in jawdropping style.

THE RING CRAFT POSSE ST CATHERINE IN DUB 1972-1984 MOLI SELECTA 10 CD

Moli-Selecta clock up their tenth release with St Catherine In Dub, a collection of the best subs from the 70s and early 80s by producer Reginald "Blackbeard" Sinclair and studio outfit The Ring Craft Posse. Tappa Zukka's brother Blackbeard was Burny Lee's right-hand man for many years and now owns Tappa's old studio in Kingston.

The brief existence of The Ring Craft Posse meant they never quite achieved the fame of the Aggrovators or The Revolutionaries, although their line-up included Jamaica's elite session musicians on drums Sly Dunbar and Mickey Roach, on bass Robbie Shakespeare and Urey Parkes and crack horn section of Bobby Ellis, Name, Dennis Fraser and David Madden. The opening track "West Bay" is based on a Burning Spear rhythm from Studio One days known as "Flea Fasser". Other subs gathered here are versions of songs by Dennis Brown, Delroy Wilson, George Faith and Horace Andy. The tracks are named after districts of Portmore in the St Catherine region, as reflected in the old map of Jamaica on the inner pages of the cover.

SIP-A-CUP FAMILY RAIL RASTAFARI DUB SIP-A-CUP SIPS001 LP

Since his early days engineering sides for the solely mixed UK Fashion label, an early supporter of the 10" vinyl format, Gussie P's talents have gone largely unrecognized outside of the hardcore reggae fraternity. Sadly, the

strictly limited unrelease of this sparkling collection of Sip-A-Cup label dub cuts will do little to alter that situation, even though it's a prime example of inventively militant modern dub-out master at work.

Michael Prophet's voice echoes through a horn-laden cover of The Wallabies/Perry classic "Rainbow Country", while tape swirls take us into a skewed digi-version of "Bilie Jean" and just refuse to go away. Other rhythm staples follow, including a take on "Poor Marcus" on which Guide P savagely whacks the echo spring in tribute to Tubby.

SLY & ROBBIE UNMETERED TAXI: SLY AND ROBBIE'S TAXI PRODUCTIONS PREVIOUSLY SOUNDS PS43 CD/LP

Unmetered Taxi concentrates on the earlier Taxi productions of the drum and bass duo who were to become known as The Riddim Twins. Responsible for one of the few definitive production sounds in reggae, from the early 1980s onwards Sly & Robbie were tempted into work with major stars, most notably on Bob Dylan's *Avalanche* but most creatively with Grace Jones.

Consequently their homing work has often been unjustly ignored. Certainly The Tamino's version of Randy Newman's "Baltimore" is as fine a production as emerged in any genre throughout that decade. The way the dub goes on takes it to a sublime level. All the tunes here are strong enough to carry the versions that follow, including the Vodous "Haara Made Of Stone", The Wailing Souls' "Old Brown" and Jimmy Riley's "Love And Devotion". Surface to say, it's unmissable for Sly & Robbie fans, if only for the artwork and the inclusion of the Dennis Brown dubplate version of "Revelation". Go for the vinyl – it's a deep cat double, and the early 80s pes, courtesy of photographer and Jammy biographer Beth Lesser, look that much better.

STEREOTYP MEETS AL'HACA PHASE ONE KLEN KLOK 15"

Last year Stereotyp's debut album *My Sound* on the Vienna-based G-Stone Records label faced no R&B styling into the folds of mid-European electro-reggae with Paul St Hilaire, the man until recently known as Tiki Man, among other more soul-based angles. On Phase One, Viennese producer Stefan North teams up with the stylized inclined Al'Haca Soundsystem but the result veers away from sonic miscategorisation into the rampantly pure exuberance of dancehall.

The standout track is "Bless It", which features the recently reappeared Jamaican DJ Hawley in a plainly ridiculous but irresistable piece of dumb-as-braggadocio over a pulsing rhythm, producing the effect of being meteorically and irreversibly punched in the ear by a pugilistic one-round is enough. Compared to this, Polish DJ MC ROM on "Watch Me Rip" is tame and laughable, and the efforts from Lady Saw and Shaggy are routine. □

Electronica

Reviewed by Chris Sharp

ALTER EGO

TRANSFORMER

KLANG ELECTRONIC KLANG011 CD

As anyone who treasures their copy of Highway to Hell will tell you, chewing out megalomaniac, rabbit-rousing earthens is no simple matter. But with Transformer, Alter Ego deliver a succession of enfusing knockout acid headlocks with the kind of casual panache that no one makes total devotion to the cause. The opening "Rockin'" sets out their stall with commendable agency — it's thumping, driving Acid Techno from the old school, enlivened by a ringing wordless chorus that suggests the mechanical pli to just the right extent. The rest of the record follows up with similar economy, darkness and engorged purpose. Jon Eling Illius and Roman Flugel are the next behind the machines, and while the feeling references to David Hasselhoff's Model 500, cassette Acid, and even Fozzy on "Nasty Details" reveal their rawly awareness of history, it's held in check by a tangible sense of spunk. There are a couple spacy interludes, but the bonging stuff like "Beat The Bush" works best. All told, it's enough to quicken the pulse of the most jaded old timer.

DECOMPOSURE

TAKING THINGS A PART

UNSCHOOLED UN005 CD

You could write an extensive essay about the ideas underlying the construction of this, the debut album by a 21 year old Canadian called Caleb Mueller — and, to some, the better, he's already done it. Taking Things Apart is an engrossing collection of homebrew assemblages inspired (as the copious, literate and laidback sleeve notes make clear) by an awareness of the constant processes of environmental sound and by an impulse to free electronic composition from the dead, atavistic clutches of the computer processor. Setting himself up in deliberate opposition to the legions of electronic droids who hide a lack of inspiration behind the rigorous pursuit of sterile sonic perfection, Mueller has focussed instead on the texture of everyday life. Recording vignettes from his daily activities onto analogue cassette, he then revisits and recombines these random excerpts to shape them into song. Each track title tells you what the sound source was ("Stereobike", "Matchbox", "Nitrosox Guitars" and "Headphones" are among them) and these downbeat declarations conceal a multitude of investigating detail. Like the Renaissance poets who found liberation by binding their imagination to the structures of sonnet form, Mueller conjures expansive resonances from his humble palette, not least on "Speech", which deploys George W Bush's post-9/11 statement to sobering effect.

HOLZKOPF

THIS CD IS AN APOLOGY

DANTYDEATH D006 CD

Avaliable in a limited edition of 500 and positively boasting with skewed reflexion attitude, this is the kind of release that makes its worth. Whether you like it self-expression or just self-indulgent, there's no denying the desquoting,

invigorating impact of this kind of outsider art. It's the work of Jeka Hardy who, closeted in his Sanktbocken home studio, claims out rampant, anarchic, hard-panned, distorted, skittering electronica mayhem, crumpling his compositions with the searing abandoned fragments of a million hard disk edits, and imbuing them with the kind of restless mutant life that you'd normally only encounter at the wrung end of a nuclear apocalypse. A track like the superbly named "No Guns No Pride" verges on the indecipherable. It's a slurred, woody, jingling mess, all uncoordinated strums and ratty tweeter breakdowns, which collapses into radioactive chaos before emerging like some primordial slug to crawl doggedly to its choking conclusion. And this is just one of 13 rawhewn gemstones here, ranging from the apoplectic "Summertime Power Electronics of Toronto Riot" to the beetle, luminous rainbow of "101 Cars". For connoisseurs of the outer limits of at least, the churning, squealing, yet somehow serene "Solar Causes Waves To Kill Themselves" is worth the price of entry alone.

DANI JOSS

LIQID PHOTOGRAPHY

POTRA NEGRK PNK2 CD

The Brussels-based post-rock five piece Sankt released their debut album on Potra Negra last year — *Time And Tide* was a languid, semi-improvised and midinously affecting miasma through capacious spaces, and Liquid Photography sees founder member Dani Joss continuing along similar lines with these recordings under his own name. The methodology is different, however — as a solo artist, Joss focuses more on the possibilities of digital synthesis, crafting slow building, stately swashes of sounds which have enough carnal impetus to sustain the listener's interest. In fact, Liquid Photography occasionally veers on the theatrical — the opening "Pete [sic] Confidence [sic] Face" has the moody drama of a Werner Herzog film soundtrack, while the composite track features a moody guitar line that vibrates threateningly somewhere between Duane Eddy, Tom Waits and Pendleton, while the kind, hanging pangs of track four quiver with unrevealed regret. The title of this piece says it all — "Two Eyes Staring At Each Other Knowing That They're Going In Different Directions, Breding A False Sense Of Hope". We've all been there, I guess.

KAPTEIN KALIBER

PI DIGITAL REMASTERT

TELLE024 CD

Quirkiness is as a difficult task to pull off, and there's no doubt that the task is made all the harder if you choose to dress up in penguin suits for a living. But beneath generate the looky onstage behaviour (and the laid artwork, which looks like the deranged product of an Elton John Sketch session in the special needs department) it becomes clear that Kaptein Kaliber somehow manage to inject enough poise and imagination into their music to merit serious attention despite all the antics. The brewe

Kapow is the brainchild of John Hegna and David Asheim, who got together in their home town of Bergen in the mid-90s to offer an antidote to the surfeit of British copycats then infesting the Swedish landscape. PI Digital Remaster gathers together the pick of the tracks that they have released on Telle over the last couple of years and it's a diverse enough showcase, ranging from the shimmering, hawkeye analogue drift of the opening "Mikel Angelo Brund's Song", which lurchs at a debt to Cluster, to the spry, twitchy "Under Base", which is closer to The Black Dog's percussive sparteness. Hegna and Asheim promptly throw the rule book out of the window — "Heb" is a spasmodic, crunchy oasis of Mu-Du and The Bhundis Boys, while the even more remarkable "Synell" is a brittle, bang-down country hoedown that somehow manages to ascend to magically levitated altitude. Blithe, but brutal.

NORMAL POSITION

RAVE KILLED THE ROMANCE

DEEP WATER DW002 CD

Imagine, if you can, Ivor Cutts' grandfather making a creamy, string-drenched, yet somehow disquieting concept album about loss, the passing of time and the pleasurable inconveniences of bodily fluids, and you'd part of the way towards getting your head around Normal Position. It's difficult to accurately gauge the sincerity levels of *Rave Killed The Romance* but there's an Arts Council logo on the artwork, so let's assume that this can't some elaborate flea and take things at face value, just for the hell of it. Once the bucolic trinkling of the opening "Mystery" is out of the way, we're confronted with "Autroy", and a Radioheadically processed voice which declares, "If you're asking how my love life is/it will be/replied/then it's a toilet roll in my room/I use it for working and crying." Throughout, Normal Position combines equally poetic grace with surreal pratfalls — there's some insanely playful playing (accord on string quartet, placed fiddle guitar) and plenty of clean, icy percussion, all of which is counterpointed by titles like "Up You Bin" and "Sext On Your Knees". If The Incredible String Band had descended sarniens and sequences, they might just have come up with something like this.

SKETCH SHOW

LOOPHOLE

THU SAX SLE001 CD

Another instalment of sunnethous loneliness from sans old masters — Sketch Show being the most recent incarnation of Yellow Magic Orchestra's sometime rhythm section, Naomasa Hosoya and Yukihiro Takahashi. Loophole is their third collection in the last 18 months and it carries on where last year's Tenchi mini-album left off, effortlessly combining stringent digital and offhand, artful melody with inimitable ease. They're joined on some of these pieces by their old colleague Ryuichi Sakamoto, and his cool tones add to the sensibility of nonchalance's sophistication.

Although this isn't conventionally minimalist, nothing is overstated, and while it retains an organic charm, everything is nonetheless precisely calibrated, like the carefully measured doses of sweet feedback that initiate the opening "Men" or the plucked hand plucking through "Rales". As ever, it's a love for the fragments of detail that beats at the heart of "Loophole". Every sound is as masterfully textured and so neatly placed that the listener is irresistibly drawn into the mix. However, as the tender closing jubilee "Sally" demonstrates, this perfectionism is anything but a barrier to expressiveness. Sketch Show have clearly hit a rich vein of form. Perhaps there's no substitute for experience after all.

STRATEGY

DRUMSOLO'S DELIGHT

KIMBER HOWEWS CO

It's a fair bet that there aren't too many electronic excuses on the terraces at Leicester City's Walkers Stadium, so the gentle irony of the man behind Strategy (John Motot) sharing his name with the recently infamous Leicester striker Paul Diaby will go largely unappreciated. It's difficult to imagine this Paul Diaby committing any kind of notable indiscretion, however. *Drumso's Delight*, his second album, flexes out the twirly sparkle of last year's debut *Stunt* with any long-held ambient wistfulness, each piece evolving with unruffled, almost regal calm. But Strategy's amniotic textures aren't absolutely straightforward — they arrive shot through with tiny percussive details and fleecing some events, each one lining up to form part of the lightly triced, crystalline rhythms that elevate the music away from being mere ambient fodder into something altogether more complex and alluring. And don't worry — not a dum dum solo in sight.

CHRISTOPHER WILLITS

POLLEN

MALTBONE M001 CD

The total waste of MSP and Super Colider generated glitch music that threatened to overwhelm electronic music during the click 'n' cut era has, thankfully subsided — and the reactions to that approach and aesthetic have been widely varied. Likewise, Christopher Willits refuses to abandon the software that made this music so widespread, but he has found a way to use it in a much more organic, and, for want of a better word, musical way. When explains why, perhaps with a nod to Michael Bublé's "innocent" guitar, Willits describes his instrument as "folksy guitar" — he uses purpose built patches to manipulate his playing in real time. By focussing on the process as it happens, he can react to it, conjuring a genuine dialogue between man and code as he responds to the computer's treatment of his previous responses. The music develops a fractal feel, and as these dancing exceptions are woven warmly together, form generating form, they coalesce almost magically into complex and harmonically satisfying structures. It's gently understated, entirely modern and really rather beautiful. □

Global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

STEVEN FELD

THE TIME OF BELLS

VÖX/CD 104 CD

A companion to the recent Smithsonian Fellows releases *Art and Winter Festivals* of Greek Macedonia, this most recent collection from anthropologist Steven Feld presents Europe's sonatas. Bells of all sizes, from cow bells to church carillons, unite the six tracks comprising *The Time Of Bells*, though cars, farm animals, televisions, leaping waves and even the rumble of sound presented by Feld's atonal microphone. The continuing rattle of belled farm animals moving through the landscape meshes with the distant tolling of the angelus in rural French towns, adding to the 'same river' that flows the length of this disc. Through the impressive technical resources displayed on *Voices Of The Rainforest* (Feld's previous collaboration with Moeyo Hardi) he is meshing his sensitivity to the nuances of the European environment are fully on par with Bowen, Feld's multi-disc chronicle of the music and surroundings of New Guinea tribesmen. Those with a deeply held fondness for metallophones and audio weird will find much of substance here.

HASMIK HARUTYUNYAN & THE SHOGAKEN ENSEMBLE

ARMENIAN LULLABIES

TRADITIONAL CROSSOVER/CD 4331 CD

The latest instalment in producer (and label) proprietor Helmut Haagman's presentationist agenda finds Hasmik Harutyunyan singing lullabies in dialect Armenian regional tongues, swathed in reverbs sufficient to coat a few Scott Walker albums. The Shogaken Ensemble support her voice with performances whose delicacy betters great tenor strength. Dudaik (the ancient wood flute best identified with latebame Djivan Gasparyan), tenuously plucked oboe, lap zither (zurme) and the indigenous spike fiddle known as kemenche add overtones of mystery and progeny to these hypnagogic molasses. Harutyunyan's readings of those 19th century songs compare well with the vocal stylings of Transylvanian vocalist Maria Sebastian. The former's vibrato, while more pronounced, lends a toothy aspect anticipated in the name of mixed-in oddities. The wavy gremmels we can hear from centre circle, notwithstanding not so surging given the prevalence of infant mortality in the era from which this material is drawn. More than pathetically for singing infants, these songs are snapshots of village life from the perspective of frustrated wives, Christian and pagan motifs intertwined in these poems to infant disappointment, longing, for former loves and the lust for revenge, topics even now not covered in Mothercare manuals.

KÉKÉLÉ

CONGO LIFE

STREETS ST1007 CD

Anything like sensitivity and romance in squalid, the wonderful dance music of the Congo, has generally been scandalised flat with the onslaught of computer-driven rhythms and numberless, endless electric guitar arpeggios. Kéké-

lé however reheat and recast an older, pre-MIDI notion of the genre and have created a new music, ultimately more enjoyable than anything to have emerged from the studios of Paris or Kinshasa during the past decade. A breed of nostalgia runs unashamedly through Congo Life, as with its predecessor Rumba Congo, yet the novel arrangements and loose limbed swing permeating both discs speak of invention and ready wit. Those qualities originally distinguished the output of Les Quatre Étoiles; that group's vocalists Nyberne and Wulu Mayi and guitarist Syvan Mbanza form the core of Kékélé. What was not so long ago the elusive province of amplified players has been happily unpicked here, the bistro to hear the seductive wail of vocals. Accents routinely supplied by brass sections or guitars have been replaced for the gentler timbres of woodwinds and violins, resulting to good effect the endearing blend of French Caribbean islands. François Bégaït's production lends extra spiff and fluidity to these tracks, notably on the 13 minute plus "Souverain OK Jazz", wherein these former members of France's seminal Kinshasa dance band pay tribute to their fallen leader and his principal songwriter.

THE LEGENDARY

GEORGE SIRANDA

SOUTHERN RHODESIA

1948/49/50/52

SHARP WORD SWP9989 CD

George Siranda was one of the ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey's most significant discoveries. The percolating blend of regime and local folkloric forms from his native Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) made Siranda the first sub-Saharan music sensation. His songs' popularity extended to audiences as far afield as Kenya, where fans couldn't understand him but sang along at the same time. His "Gads Guds" travelled further still, entering the repertoire of American folk musicians, igniting controversy as to the lyrical actual meaning. As with his contemporary across the Atlantic, Hank Williams, success prompted perplexity for Siranda; he shrunk himself to death. Inpirational verse, to consider when confronted by the next World Music sensation tailored for export, as found in Siranda's own epic in song, "Chun Mama": "When I die, my money will go for the ragtime melody: 'Buyout' and I'm impressed, these songs he写出 to be pillared by Beck.

KOO NIMO/TO JAZZ/

KWAA MENSEH

VINTAGE PALMWINNE

CRIMBAND CRIB68 CD

More examples of Ghéno's acoustic guitar groups, purveyors of 'palmwine' highlights, in a splendid companion volume to the recently released *The Guitar And The Gun* (Earthworks). Both discs collect recordings produced by John Collins at his Rekor Studio during the 1970s and 80s. The support with local musicians enjoyed by Collins is unassimilable, as the performances heard on these discs – related to the point of sleepiness – render the recording process effectively transparent. On Vintage Palmwine,

three artists (TD jazz, Kwaa Mensah and Koo Nimo) sing of military coups, death, divine tribulation and unfertilized matas, though you'd never know from the inescapable mesh of 3+2 clave rhythms and acoustic finger-picking that drives everything heard herein. The translated lyrics from Koo Nimo's "Odo Akosomu" read like a grim Aztec陶土 fantasy ("Hungry and skeletons are around..."), its bass lines supplied by a massive thumping piano. Yet this track and all its companions are the stuff of a great party. Especially if washed down with palmwine.

MOHAMMED RAFI

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO

BOLLYWOOD LEGENDS

WORLD MUSIC NETWORK RMGNET1000 CD

Personable and elusive, Mohammed Rafi could easily be considered the Indian subcontinent's answer to UK's wartime dance band vocal star Al Bowlly. Then again, Al never had to hold his own against surf guitars or a battery of strings, nor was he obliged to surmount an 'ideological falling out' with the dynarome of Bollywood playback singers, Lata Mangeshkar. These things Rafi did with style during nearly four decades of supplying the singing voices for India's many movie ledes. Other singers have exhibited comparable talent, but it was Rafi's versatility and carry charge of composers that assured his ongoing status among moghulies and film executives alike. This collection manages to dispel myth 16 performances that haven't appeared on other film singer (film song) compilations, of which there's currently a surfeit. The unseen maestro id'd in fluent in many styles, ranging from pop come-ups to filmi qawwali, devotional music of the Sufi sort as adapted for film scores. Of course, well-matched Indian film music brings much joy, though curiously the most recent songs included on *The Rough Guide*, those done from the 70s, sound fairly whitened when compared to entries from previous decades, such as 1968's "Babul 99 Qayam Let".

VARIOUS

CARIBBEAN VOYAGE: THE

FRENCH ANTILLES

ROUNDER 81611730 CD

In 1962, ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax visited three small islands in the Lesser Antilles Caribbean Islands (Guadeloupe, Martinique and St Barthélemy) colonised by France. He found what amounted to a remarkable time capsule containing Afro-Cuban drumming, archaic European courtly dances such as the quadrille and their offspring – newer, urban forms such as the beguine. Discrete pockets of ethnic minorities, such as the Indian population found on Guadeloupe, had not been integrated into the larger population at the time of Lomax's visit – vicious drum and vocal chant music still retained significant artefacts of their old culture. In the years before zouk radiated outward into the large world from this archipelago, Francophone beguine rhythms and melodies rippled through urban street parades

VARIOUS

MENTO MADNESS

V2 VHL025513 CD

THE MIGHTY SPARROW

HOT + SWEET

BARAKA/BARAKA/BHARAT BHARAT 10101 CD

Jamaican music continues to exert an international influence out of all proportion to the island's size. It wasn't always so, as the development of its recording industry lagged well behind Trinidad, whose indigenous calypso established commercial invasions on other islands and in the US throughout the early 20th century. Such was the latter's influence that practitioners of mento, Jamaica's own pop hybrid, were initially forced to describe their own sound as 'calypso'. The distinctive doublets appear semantically to most ears, unable to serve much difference between the earliest sets cut in Jenson studios, a newly minted Alton McAlice, and those of Trinidadian contemporaries such as Wilmett Halliday. However, in his notes, Steve Barakay argues convincingly for the uniqueness of Kingston's first singles. Not that it takes subtlety (Halliday is full of the sordid wit, shuffling beat and machine gun dozen of Harold Richardson and Tim Tooleys' "Gunner Gal", the first song released outside the island). Mento Madness is an archival mount, raising hopes that further comparable CDs will appear from this pre-ska era.

As a hurricane pummelled Miami, a party raged for two days within a local recording studio, presided by producer Van Dyke Parks for the ages (with emergency generator power) as 1972's *Hot + Sweet*. The Mighty Sparrow was in fine form, with timely lyrics and a delivery equalised and rude by turns. As in Park's own writing, Sparrow consistently championed the underdog. Both men love a beat arrangement that's hellbent for suction. The bittersweet delights of Hot + Sweet confirmed the producer's claim that Trinidad's composers were the equals of Europe's acclaimed modernists. The set also offers testimony to Sparrow's enduring status as the Balala of his homeland, with a keen and cutting view of the human condition.

WARSAW VILLAGE BAND

PEOPLE'S SPRING

WORLD VILLAGE 4868200 CD

Wem this set not so heavily invested in updating the acoustic toolkits of rural Poland, they could easily pass for Ping Pockers. The symphonies are all there – shuffling, complex time signatures, attenuated screaming, sputtering of the possibilities afforded by recording studio craft, seismic drumming and weird stringed instruments; in this case the Polish fiddle known as the suka. Brief interludes of hammered dulcimer briefly invoke the memory of Anton Karas and his soundtrack for *Cat Ballou*'s The Tex Willer. Then the rest of the group grab these quarens mettids kernels and thrash them soundly. Turning on a dime, the two female vocalists wall a lament for lost youth, their voices interpolated with a trumpet solo possessed of furrow attack and disorienting echo repeats, recalling Mongolia Feels's playing on Robert Wyatt's *Rock Bottom*. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

SLEEPY BROWN

I CAN'T WAIT

LAPAZ PRONO 12"

Sleepy Brown is best known as the tall, Isaac Hayes-esque sideman, always lurking his sponsor, Outkast's Big Boi. After applying his unspectacular falsetto to a decent spot of Dungeon Family projects, he steps out for his first solo single. What's strange about "I Can't Wait" is that it's essentially two songs in one—Sleepy's parts feature overzealous, strutting Casio strings and a terribly laid-back chime, while OutKast's half is all replies, heartbeat tick-ticks and a stealthy, bleeping bass. Andre 3000 usually raps (albeit very gingerly) and polka-sly fun at his Atlanta brethren ("I'm in the Southern states/Where all them pimps be/dressing all bougie and carrying ugly caps"). Since it's ostensibly a lo-fi song, Andre complements his real live by invoking Trane's old sidekick, "You're over me/ming the real McDog."

CAPPO

GRAND FINAL

ZEBRA TRAFFIC ZEBRAGRAPH01 12"

Call me a snobophile but I still don't quite get a lot of British Hip-Hop. Nottingham's Cappo is an exception. He debut album from last year, *Spiral The World*, held its own against most American releases, thanks largely to the P Brothers' sly happy beats and Cappo's tough nonsequiturs. "Grand Final" is a slow crawler ensured. The RZA and featuring a dense baseline and a strong sample of What's Love. The little children crying on each other's shoulders. The Queens' Soul Orchestra's funk remix of "Learn To Be Strong" is fantastic, though Cappo's brusque vocal style doesn't exactly fit the chunky versioning here. Alice Rattner's scorching refix ("You gotta learn to be strong, you gotta take care of your own") incorporates Cappo's foreboding lyrics, turning this anthem for the sour, self-made boy into a peevish, jocular argument for unity through funk.

EYEDEA & ABILITIES

EAA

RHEMUS/VERSTAND 07105 CD

The second album from the Minnesota duo is the sort of staff that wins championships, instead has done—rapper Eyedea is a veteran of rap battles and won 1999 Scribble Jam Champion. He's in pugnacious, slowdown mood here, although as fleet as he is verbally that the belligerents never becomes worrisome. The sheer showmanship of Attila's beats, meanwhile, makes for a fast-cut, headspinning experience, especially when he scratches Eyedea's own rhymer into the mix, or outbreaks on a psychotic bumble drone on "Rox," a twisted variation on Public Enemy's "Public Enemy Ko 1." There still remains the problem for Eyedea & Abilities as what eventually they're going to do with all this virtuosity—"Gase," with its rattling, honky-tonky guitar riff and neo-Afrobeat-style rap nor suggests that they have these preoccupations not yet fully integrated into their primary, blazing Hip-Hop style. Still, this album seethes with potential energy (David Stables)

FREEWAY

ALRIGHT (BLACKBEARD REMIX)
BLACKBEARD BIZARROO 12"

We are conditioned to believe that smooth is bad. Producer just made created "Weight" as an obvious homage to A Tribe Called Quest's "Electric Relaxation"—it uses the same Ronelle Foster sample, emphasizes the swing a bit more and replaces the boom-bap with handclaps. He's tried to push the beat two, first as a slow dance for soul man Allen Anthony and more recently as a soldier belted for rapper Freeway (also featuring Arista). But this white label remix from England's mysterious Blackbeard (possibly a member of the less mysterious Yon Wa mixx group) best captures what Just Blaze was trying to say. Blackbeard reimagines "Weight" as a frantic jazz workout, extending and replacing parts of the beautifully subtle Foster sample. The remix creeps slowly, setting cengos, a flicking Rhodes and a bassline to the baseline to the original track, preserving Freeway's wounded, "this can't be life" rhyme. The track fades out with a ringing vibro reverb softening Anthony's nice voice. Where the originals cloaked their emotional, wavy centres in shine, Blackbeard's remix sounds joyful, swinging and more introspective than you would think.

HOSTFACE

THE DRUMMER
WU-TANG PROMO 19"

"I might need it to be a little more crystal". Ghostface Killah holters over a drum loop so busted and scratchy, its imperfections become part of the track. With the exception of maybe Kool Keith, Ghost is one of the few "bad" and proud rappers with anything hitting at commercial appeal. From crying over Barry White ("I Can't Go Sleep") and laying over The Defenses ("Killa") to weeping a jewel encrusted, basketball-stud studded status on his wrist, it seems the older he gets, the wiser he gets. "The Drummer" is the type of absurdist art in the family" pose cut that once made Wu-Tang Gang unbreakable, with Ghost at the head of the table dadd in a "blue-blaze" bringing about the aqua in his well Method Man brooks from his acting schedule to offer "El Fijo Loco/Oh no, I am! Roko!" See? It off makes us appreciate Ghost for trying and Big Daddy Nine for doing. Ghost tries to rhyme to Kool's mega-fest instrumental, and through he struggles to keep up, he soldiers forward.

KAN KICK

THE TRADITIONAL HERITAGE
SMOKY DAY 07012 CD

The boozing backlands of central California offer little by way of scenery or culture, so those interested in seeing other worlds usually do so the old fashioned way—drags. Or, as Kan Kick clarifies, "odives Of Dunes". Kan Kick's stuff has always sounded like approximations of Motown beats, but this collection of spare loops and beat tape highlights from 1996-2001 reveals that the two shared more than the occasional long hit back in the day. "The A-1 Sound" sounds great for 1999, its flickering

agan flagging in the wind alongside shit-hard drum snap. Like much here, "Witness Truthful Myself" is all stony, bloodshot eyes as a nickel bagged Kan hoarsely brags that hell's "crack" version over version like Dennis Alcapone's "Song For My Fontaines" is a great half-thought. Its mungy, liquid baseline and horn suggesting a chapter version of "Fakin' Jack". The heavy, clipped drums of "Unpredictable" seem cribbed from the great hoodshredder "Lurker Leefah", though the meandering keyboards clearly aren't. With no light, subtle instruments and reserved drumming, the sublime "Read And A Blue Rayon" is pure Bay Area. "Extremestromic Traveller" sounds like Kan's mission statement, a ton of vocal samples trying to be heard over the drums and particles stuck in the sampled record's grooves. All in all, a reason for a very, very high day.

THE NEXT STETS

KAMIEK ISD008 12"

We like to point up people Under The Stets' This One for its tendency to look backwards. But then Kamieks' remix 12" series comes along and you realize why he cares little about the present, and why people like him for it. An indie Hip-Hop equivalent of neophytes, Kamieks here hires present day producers to reinterpret yesterday's hits. For the inaugural entry Theo has his way with the soula from two classic Steeplechase tracks that really weren't dying for the remix treatment. He does this with "Sally" a tiny bit, reuniting her with more off balance drums and upping its symphony count. The OG "BBC Let The Music Play" used "Cessa The Trade", so it's impossible to say that this improves on it. But Theo's innovation is pretty good, from the descending, "Party And Bulshit" like momentum of the baseline to his reverent guest verse. Following through on the time machine instincts implicit in every People Under The Stets song, Theo goes back in time and recalls days of "sleekin' the airbrush/Eatin' at Taco Bell, drivin' a Grape Crail".

ROMANOWSKI

STEADY ROCKING
FUTURE PRIMITIVE FPT02012"

We hold think that the idea of fusing Hip-Hop and Jamaican music had run its course, considering the ubiquity of dancehall figures like Sean Paul and Elephant Man. Statistically, San Francisco's way-of-dash artist and producer Romanowski's contribution to this mini-genre are for harder hitting songs and invokes more obscure referents. Neither dub nor reggae-obsessed, Roman's fever is for rocksteady reggae and Old School ska. Oddly, it works really well. "Fat Piker" sports a deep pocket boom and the creeky, Ernest Ranglinish picking of Port or Rhythm Jaz Whizbord. The skank isn't too obnoxious and there's an appropriately wobbly balance of highs and lows. "Why" like Hip-Hop drama underneath a buoyant reggae instrumental, as a capella switches converse freely. "Chalice" does something similar, this time replacing the airiness and drift of the sample's original rhythm track with more authoritative snaps.

RICCI RUCKER & MIKE BOO

SCETCH BOOK

GROUND IN COLOR SICLP999 CD/LP

The "turntable as instrument" argument has needed a booster shot for a few years now. With the exception of D-Styles and maybe Rodat, few of the celebrity scratch DJs from the late 90s (Q-Bert, Caze, The Beat Junkies, The X-eucoubers) still deal exclusively in willie-wikas. Ricci Rucker and Mike Boo once tried plugging in and performing on a sidewalk in Santa Monica, only a cap intended on the grounds that "the turntable is not an instrument". But there were double standards in effect; the next week, they claim, some guy was in the exact same spot, playing a rig made up of pots and pans, a reason for a very, very high day.

The enigmatic, intensely committed pair still hold steady to the possibilities of a genuine "Search music" and the sketches and half-thoughts they collect on Sketch Book (sic) are both unusually listenable and Unbelievably technical. "The Cloud Above" commences with stadium rock drum looks but departs for modular timbres. The guitars are manipulated to an unhearing effect, near the end, they juggle two guitar samples back and forth in order to induce a killer fireworks-and-smoke solo. "If You Don't Break Your Neck, We Will" continues the thought. The effect here is more Siester than Van Halen as Tadpole shows up to pepper the trash with sketches of feedback and people shrieking in pain. "Simply Eternal Now" is a lovely, floating take on the despicable "Homeless In New York" bleeds into "Singing Off", which asks (and answers) the question, "What would Jim play if he didn't have a guitar?"

VARIOUS

THE THIRD UNHEARD: CONNECTICUT HIP-HOP 1979-

1983

STONES THROW STWD0637 CD/1XLP

Other than Stax, Wile, the highway that connects New York to Massachusetts and some great college basketball, Connecticut is, in the parlance of rats, a pretty skip-on state. The first of two volumes designed to recover its place in Hip-Hop culture, "The Third Unheard" is a bizarrely fetching portrait of small flies trying to find themselves. Though "Rappin' With Mr Magic" is woefully amateur, there's a slyly charm to his call-and-response about bats: "Stanford! Wow!! Bridgerton! New Haven!!" Posse Blew also has troubles hitting his spots over doubles of Herman Kelly, but has other things on his mind, ordering his fellow adolescents to "get up and go to school".

The Duran Four's "Million Dollar Legs" shows quantum improvement in the stats' style—the song, one of the best of its time, is all tension and release, with nice harmonizing, cowbells and an expert bend. On Major's utterly weird "2001 Kazoo", the rof is lighter and the interplay of synthesizer and kazoo chords tempestuous never again explored in Hip-Hop, unfortunately. Better secure all those footstools and Carr MC records before the second volume hits. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

DEREK BAILEY & MILO FINE

DEREK BAILEY & MILO FINE

EMANEM 4659 CD

Milo Fine is the improvising equivalent of a one man band. He's played drums, piano and clarinet since the 60s and 70s and in 1980 he invented the in-drums, made up of "found objects" and broken crystalline attached to a practice pad set, later incorporating low tech electronics. He also plays cells, trombone, accordion, violin, mirlitons and celeste, but on the live recording from his 2003 UK tour he restricts himself to clarinet, electronic keyboards and drums. Described as an "aesthetic absolutist", for Fine, the most grandiose is as popular music. For Bailey, of course, all music is suspect. Fine's approach isn't just "ready to hand" – he's a real virtuoso on his instruments, and the result is some powerful yet hardcore improv.

ERIC BARBER MAYBECK PROJECT

PRIMENTAL 015 CD

Born in 1972, Barber has worked with California EAR Unit, Deesman Manory and Leo Smith. His voice doesn't quite fit "definite categorisation" as it says him, but his tenor and soprano sax playing is smoky, featuring an essentially classical tone that grots on Indian and Balkan influences. While there's no such thing as a jazz embouchure or a jazz saxophone sound, classical sax tone is uniform and anonymous, often using a classic embouchure and a mouthpiece that gives a neutral tone. But Barber overcomes the drawback through forceful playing with intonations, especially on tenor – the plaintive lowing of "Isaac" is extraordinary. When multiphonics are absent, as on "Rubin", the classical base is clearer, while "Dark Mirror" has affinities both with 60s minimalism and with Evan Parker's solo soprano work. Allegro/riten rub and string.

SALVATORE BONAFODE JOURNEY TO DONNAFUGATA

CAMAZZI CAM70923 CD

Born in Palermo, Sicily, planet Bonafode studied at the Conservatory there and draws on the greatest of Sicilian novels in his latest project, *Donnafugata* is the country seat of Fabrizio, Prince of Salina, The Leopards of Lampedusa's classic novel, who watches and waits as Garibaldi's unification of Italy freesides a new order. Wisconsin's film has recently been remade, no longer the bawdy that Hollywood made of it in 1967, and Bonafode treats Nine's score as the basis for his jazz interpretations. He's assembled the dream team of John Abercrombie (guitar), Enrico Rava (trumpet), Bill Sato and Clarence Penn on bass and drums. His adaptation of 16th elements, broken up with snatches of Verdi, is a brilliantly conceived and realised project.

PETER BRÖTZMANN/JOE MCPHEE/KENT KESSLER/ MICHAEL ZERANG TALES OUT OF TIME

HITLOGY 029 CD

With Brötzmann eschewing McPhee's cooler influence, this isn't a continuous assemblist but

a sensitively varied offering. Compositions are by the saxophonists and drummer Michael Zerang, featuring dedications to three great, now dead beauties – "Master Of A Small House" for Ned Sublette and "In Anticipation Of The Next" for Wilbur Morris and Peter Kowald. The first of these is arithmatic and dignified, with Brötzmann the embodiment of Albert Ayler. "Stone Poem No. 1" is a quiet duet for the two saxophonets. Then McPhee takes up trumpet against the fast pulses of Kessler's bass on "Something There Is That Doesn't Love", while Zerang's delicate percusion on his own "Cymbalism" is a highlight.

PAUL DUNMALL & PAUL ROGERS

AWARENESS RESPONSE

EMANEM 4651 CD

These long tracks, with Dunmall on bassoon bagpipes, tenor and soprano sax respectively Rogers is on ALU bass, a six string instrument extending into the cells register, which has a dozen sympathetic strings to enhance the volume produced by its slender body. On "Pressure Response" Dunmall plays pipes, the softer toned variety from the Borders rather than the Highlands. I would guess it's hard to impose a personalised tone on this ready-resonating instrument, and certainly the tenor sax track that follows, "Peaceless Response", more beautifully captures the British master's rich, breathy sound. His is a superb duo performance, with Dunmall tending towards tape, broken up flurries of notes.

GHIDRA

STRAW SKINFLINT
601 DRK 800790 CD

Seattle-based Ghidra is Bill Holst on guitar, Wally Sharp on alto sax and Mike Peterson playing drums. Their debut release, "Free jazz meets punk", says the Sol Dok website, and with Sheep on board – one of the rare professed free imprecursors in the US – I was expecting an tour of pandemonium. The sears' tone is almost all edge, which can get irritating, but the relative brevity of the tracks, from two to six minutes, and the solo space given to Harstad and Peterson render these unirritating. Hypnotic intensity: Holst's prefigured guitar work has been compared to Fred Frith and Henry Kaiser, but here he's in power strutting mode, laying down a groove on "Slow Rider" and even causing Sheep to pause for reflection on "Disclosing Your Eyes".

VIJAY IYER

BLOOD SUTRA
ARTISTS HOUSE AHM CD

It's good to see John Snyder resurrecting his Artists House label and especially to see him working with pianist Vijay Iyer. Once a member of the Bay Area's Asian-American Improv scene, Iyer has returned to his New York birthplace and has a new group featuring Rudresh Mahanthappa on alto, Stephen Crump on bass and Yoshinori Seto on drums. The pianist agreed chords of the opening "Prajna" are a clincher, their passage dark, challenging

explorations such as "Brute Facts", an exercise in brittleness, turbid and unrelenting, with the pianist pushing and prodding Mahanthappa to ecstatic heights in his solos. Confirmation that Iyer is one of the scene's most original players.

MICHAEL MARCUS TRIO THEM

AKTIER AKT005 CD

Marcus, active on the New York jazz scene since 1982, comes from the melodic as opposed to high octane branch of free jazz, the alto and bass clarinet drawing on Sonny Stitts and Ornette Coleman, them, which rhymes with antiven, finds him in the company of William Parker on bass and the late great Dennis Charles on drums, live at the Old Knitting Factory in 1993. Charles is also a melodic player, and his long solo on take one of "Them" could almost be by Muir Mathis. Bassine making of the drums, in particular a very splashy cymbal setting up a big wash of sound, diffuses the focus of the soundstage. But if you avoid listening on headphones, the quality of the music is clear.

GIOVANNI MIRABASSI/ FLAVIO BOLTO/R

GLENN FERRIS

((AIR))

SKETCH 014000 CD

Mirabassi belongs to an extraordinary group of lyrical Italian jazz pianists, the foremost of which is Enzo Pierunzi. This follow-up to Mirabassi's 2001 solo album *Avalon* on the same label is for the unusual if not unique formation of piano, trumpet and triangle. Mirabassi and Bolto have performed often as a duo, the pianist pushing the trumpeter's "elegance of phrasing and use of space". All compositions are by Mirabassi except for Georges Brassens' "Les Cœurs Da Passage", and lyrical predominates, albeit set against formal variety through "Mata Hari", almost piazzaises Pierunzi's plangent minor key style, when the compliment is this beautiful it's church to complain.

TRIORANGE

TRIORANGE

SONOPRENT 3000 CD

Drumming in bassist Toddick Sekashana garantit Jozef Morel, and pianist Leonard Thompson, doubling on "hoods", as it says here, off from the San Francisco Bay Area. Their beautiful album features ten thoughtful originals, "Schoen" and "Fossil Farm" are pell-mell, reflective jazz reminiscent of Bill Evans and Jim Hall collaborations. "Dove's Riddle" has more of a County feel, "Winter" and "Ayatum" are thoughtfully composed and classical. There's substance here as well as melodic attractiveness.

KEVIN NORTON'S LIVING

LANGUAGE

INTUITIVE STRUCTURES

CADENCE CR1100 CD

Drummer, vibraphone player and composer Kevin Norton is a master commonly known for his collaborations with Anthony Braxton. With the death of bassist Wilbur Morris, Norton ditched his group

Metaphor and began a completely new group with tenor and soprano saxist Louis Belanger, cellist Tomas Ulrich and bassist John Lindberg. Norton draws on many genres and traditions for his compositions on this live recording the group reproduction "Voice for Today IV", for instance, speaks the language of Blues, Messiaen, Alben Ayer and folk music from a place we've never been to". Interesting to see Luis Belanger, essentially a free jazz, fitting into this predominantly groove-based setting.

ENRICO PIERANUNZI/MARK JOHNSON/JOEY BARON

PLAY MORRICONE 2

CAMAZZI CAMU 7795 3 CD

During the 70s and 80s, Italian jazz pianist Pierunzi worked as a studio musician on dozens of Morricone soundtracks. Now he's "of the heart", with Johnson on bass and Baron on drums, releases their second volume of interpretations of Morricone compositions. They close on early fairytale offerings, the theme from *Ninfa Peste* (1960) is simple yet tantalising. The first of two themes from / Malombro/, "Funny World", a documentary from 1964, is made for a compelling hard bop treatment, while the churning "Il Can di Sicilia" confirms that Pierunzi can no longer be typcast as a lyricalist. The theme from *Esplosivo Or Sundays* provided a theme for Pierunzi which he calls a "composition within a composition". Superlative.

DONALD ROBINSON/LISLE ELLIS/BIGGI VINKELOE

BLUE REVIE

BLB 020 CD

Born in Germany, Biggi Vinkeloe has lived in Sweden since 1990, where she works as a music therapist. Reckoning her first saxophone at the late age of 24, her Swedish has recorded and toured extensively through Europe and the US. Here, she performs with the nanopartite Bay Area rhythm team of Donald Robinson and Lisle Ellis, who formed What We Live with Lucy Oots. The alto saxist's "strong, off-centre lyrical" (as an earlier review described it) beautifully contrasts with the more swinging voices of the bassist and drummer. The blueness is pervasive but off centre too, reflected in the 80s Vinkeloe plays flute on some tracks, often heavily modulated as on "Pakt Karach".

STICKS AND STONES

SHED GRACE

THRILL JOCKEY THRILL 040 CD

Sticks And Stones were the house band at Fred Anderson's Chicago Velvet Lounge before formally renaming themselves. John Abrams, Tom & Country and The Roots, is on bass – his recent disc *Cipher* was a highlight of my last year (Dive 239). Chad Taylor, of The Chicago Underground Duo with Rob Mazurek, is on drums and Marlene Roberts is on alto sax and clarinet. The follow up to their self-titled debut album, offers a series of originals plus Stayhymn's "Juliana", Fele Kelly's "Colonial Mortality", and a radically fresh version of Monk's "Skippy". The title track is an Aylerish drags against a shimmering backdrop, while Robert's clannish playing on "Worldly", for instance, is more about The reading quality is unfurling but the varied improvisations are high class. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Keith Moliné

ARM

OPEN REMINDER
MELEKTRONIK MELK006 CD

So much current laptop work is either reductive to the point of ingenuity, or feels like being horsewhipped with live power cables. And so, one falls on record as *Open Reminder* with deep, exhilarated gratitude. Arm are a Norwegian trip whose work is full of good ideas; it's like trying to focus on a passing express train. Their ghotoloy is profoundly musical, deeply experimental and utterly addictive. This is never more evident than on their collaborations with live instrumentalists, particularly the exemplary Håkon Kornstad, whose extended sax techniques enter into delicious tangles with the electronics. Their signature sound is that of indescent Terry Riley-like organ loops clipped into glittering ribbons, but they cover an extraordinary amount of sonic ground throughout. Beautiful, flowing, thrilling—here at last a laptop music to fall in love with.

COURTIS & MARHAUG
NORTH AND SOUTH NEUTRINO
ANFRICHT AFRO99101 CD

The Antifish label has put out some of the most challenging records of recent years, and this collaboration between Lasse Marhaug, one half of Norwegian noise thugs Jazkammer, and Arild Courtis, the musical maestrom behind the unruly Argentinians Reynolds, is as fascinating as they come. For the opening half hour it is a minimalist exercise in the slow motion deployment of a small clutch of extreme frequencies. Then a richer melodic texture emerges from the brittle digital atmosphere, recalling the solipsistic gear pieces of Thomas Römer. This darker, more brooding sound is submerged once more into the digital realm, as if we are viewing the same vast, immobile object from above and below the waterline. Or perhaps it's the subterranean periodic references in the album title under two different magnifications. It's certainly not an easy listen, but submit yourself to its cold, diastic logic and you will be rewarded.

ANDREW DEUTSCH
LUNG CLEANER
ANALOGUE HONEY CD

Musicon and educator Andrew Deutsch, who has collaborated regularly with Pauline Oliveros among many others, presents an interesting thesis on digital art in his sleeve notes. He posits that the listener's focus switches back and forth between the sound head and the means by which it is created, and that the temporal variations in this process make for a new experience on each hearing. I would contend that much of the "process" of Lung Cleaner is so opaque, so abstract, that any simple submits to it as sound. This is entirely true of his more static studio work, listening to which is much more a sensory, even psychotropic experience than a conceptual one. When he relates his sources more openly, he sounds made by baby toys or samples of some early electronic pieces by Oliveros, his meticulous control of a

huge variety of systems then brought to bear on the material is evident.

**DOMINIC DUVAL &
CONSTANCE COOPER**
COMING FROM US
COLUMBIA 8607 CD

Constance Cooper addresses more fundamental musical issues in this one volume of pieces than most composers tackle in a lifetime. She makes full of both an eight piece "violin family" invented by Carleen Hutchings, resulting in brighter, deeper string colors, and a new type of bow which allows the player to deliver lightning fast piccato. She leaves space in her work for the improvised bass work of sometime Cool Taylor collaborator Duval and the electronics ensemble First Avenue. She creates a different set of hand positions for each player depending on the spin of their fingers, allowing her to retain control over complex microtonal resources and the individual musicians to have the freedom to improvise within the rigors these strictures. Indeed, the scope this permits the players to stamp their own identities on the material is what gives the work its title. The result is music of great vibrancy and strength, a milestone in the quest for a meaningful improvement between composition and improvisation.

EARZUMBA
HERMOSO MOVIMIENTO/
FLORECE ESCONDIDO
DIALYSISN 05002 CD

Buenos Aires based Argentinian Christian Degenaere was another early member of Reynolds but this single CD release of two previous albums bears few traces of that group's feistiness. This is a tightly collaged sambadrome, beautifully executed and produced. For the most part he favors lush, shifting synthscapes imbued with an aching sense of place (references to his hometown of Buenos Aires reappear throughout, in the form of field recordings and heavily manipulated lo-fi and tango samples). Elsewhere, he constructs spiraling rhythmic designs from the unlikely of sample loops, fleetingly suggesting springs, pianissimo trills or dimmed turbo-charged engines, before returning to his trademark absolute zero atmospheres. Approachable and involving experimentation.

KNOBBING THISTLE
MUSIC FROM THE DEAF
CATTERY
NO LABEL, NO NUMBER CD

**FLEECE THE HAND OF
CHUMPS**
NO LABEL, NO NUMBER CD

This batch of clowns, who describe themselves as "Cell lops and Psycho TV aye-ohs", as mad as hell that Throbbing Gristle are willing to deflate their own mystery by referring to their live appearance at Points, betraying their old assurance that the "mission is terminated". It is perfectly understandable that the shabby creators of these atrocious duds have chosen to justify their tedious and rapid output by presenting it as

some kind of critical commentary. It's even conceivable that they might bookend into claiming it to be an innocent homage. But their dour, septicetic anti-thrash sounds like the sick step of henchboys refusing to accept that their proto heroes are anachronistic only to themselves. They ineptly attempt to take their revenge by lapsing into a smeg, pylosis affiliation that expresses nothing but their own creative bankruptcy. Their own regurgitated messen must thankfully come to an end, since Re-TG, the real thing is certain to provide a more accurate and entertaining pastiche than they ever could.

MINIMAL SELF
FORMULA OF REVERSAL
WAVETRAP WAW05 CD

Sentosa label boss John Eovaldi's latest project is an attempt to document a period of psychological turbulence, whether it is an illustration of his mental state reflected after the fact or a contemporaneous product of his inner turmoil is unclear, that a delirious or hallucinatory consciousness is suggested by his music, however, is quite explicit. Over the course of one 50 minute track, he waxes away at a series of discrete passages for looped samples, which range from gnawing noise to lower case vamps and flickers.

In the final third of the piece, these systematized repetitions break down into random digital chimes, as if a precarious balance has been irrevocably disturbed. Eovaldi's inventive work stands on the cusp between sound art and minimalist electronica, recalling the work of Bruce Gilbert in both its exploration of recurring patterns and its carefully contrived overarching structure.

MY CAT IS AN ALIEN
THE FIRST FLAME OF
TOMORROW
COPA C09999 CD R

THE COSMOLOGICAL EYE
TRILOGY PART TWO: INTO THE
SOMBRERO GALAXY
COPA C09970 CD R

Refracting Impressionism has a tradition of space rock, psychedelic jamming and the lo-fi explorations of groups like the Dead C. The music of the twin based Opale brothers has an unfatigued, instructive charm that has been championed in the past by Sonic Youth and Blonde Redhead.

These two album length jams (the former recorded in concert, the latter in their "Space Room") are far looser and dreamier than the work of their imitators. Both pieces desist patient, slow moving pymbals, ruing from amplifier hiss and hum. Is more urgent dialogue of percussion and guitar feedback, finally following long arcs into silence. However, there's tension in these albums, the deepest yet eggy sound of reverberating, the wildest chase, which prevents them from sinking into stoned tedium. While both of these records are interesting, *The Cosmological Eye Trilogy* is the better demonstration of their rugged prowess.

**OUTWARD SOUND
ENSEMBLE**
(WITH MARTIN ARCHER)
CLOUDBURST
TURUS 17 CD

For this opulent, absorbing release, the prolific Martin Archer joins forces with the improvising duo of Hafez Baily and Chris Melode (on brass and prepared guitar respectively). Closer to the dark ambient stylings of, say, *cavet/trace* or *Mean* than *house* *Impix*, it avouches a wealth of instrumental detail in the sweat-drenched atmospheres of Archer's processed work. Occasionally over saturated with this sepulchral echo, it's nevertheless a truly enjoyable 60 minutes. Baily's miniature splatters and snares dance around the stereo spectrum, showing his inventiveness of a bousculé *je-suis* system, and the thunderstorm that appears two thirds of the way through adds more than a touch of magic to the session.

**PAULO RAPOSO &
MARC BEHRENS**
FURTHER CONSEQUENCES OF
REINTERPRETATION
CRONICA 008 CD

Revised versions of the irresistible Raposo and Behrems alternate their rewinnings of sounds that appeared on an earlier collection of remixes of Noa Sakata's 0.000, an album comprising frequencies beyond the threshold of human hearing. The Portuguese Cronica label has a track record of conceptual high jinks, having released albums like 2003's *A Compressed History of Everything Ever Recorded By Autostitch*. But when one considers that all the sounds in the pair's source material resulted from such extreme processing that an audible feed signal wasn't actually required, it becomes clear that what this CD really documents is the sound of impressive software playing with itself. If the origin of these sounds has no bearing on the results, the entire concept is surely bankrupt. Notwithstanding the abilities of the artists involved to edit together some interesting noises, something about this offends the Laddie in me.

KEITH FULLERTON WHITMAN
ANTITHESIS
KRANTZ 094 LP

Better known as electronic Joe Illest, Whitman here presents a small selection of instrumental pieces recorded over the last ten years involving no computer processing whatsoever. It's a mixed collection of meditative sketches involving guitar, Drums, viola and percussions, all overlaid by an "ensemble" consisting of Whitman alone. Though he references La Monte Young, Karl Schenck and Knobrook in the accompanying notes, the album finds closer echoes in My Bloody Valentine's acoustic draft and the post-Banff jams of Pink Floyd. "Sobrie" is a particular maula the plodding acid rock of Floyd's *Ummagumma* rather than the karmic without process of its life. But the most frenetic piece, "Obelisk", is an impressively insatiable mix of dismembered drums and mordacious percussive flourishes. While hardly essential, *Antithesis* makes for an enjoyable half hour. □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Ray Connell — worthy of elevation?

ELEVATOR MUSIC: A SURREAL HISTORY OF MUZAK, EASY LISTENING AND OTHER MOODSONG

JOSEPH LANZOGA

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS \$18.95

BY DAVID STUBBS

This is a revised edition of a volume first published almost a decade ago. Then, the author's purpose was to set right what he saw as a snobbish and indifferent attitude towards Muzak (an actual company, incidentally, not just a pejorative genre) and other ubiquitous forms of piped music, to force a reassessment of the subtle, manipulative qualities of such genres and the good uses to which they might be put by right-minded and sympathetic contemporary musicians. As Lanzoga decently admits in the introduction here, there is a much greater awareness of Ambient music and its implications than in 1986. A grim musical experience in Melbourne, meanwhile, prompts him to note that the Ambient Utopia he'd hoped to trigger hasn't come to pass. Hence, the emphasis on the revised volume is on "unembodied nostalgia" for Muzak's vanished past or futuristic speculation.

Bewar! Music is in many ways restrictive. Its scholarly foundation is strong, with Lanzo

invoking the literature of Sir Francis Bacon, Thomas More and Aldous Huxley; the malfeasances of David's harp playing, which prevented King Saul from going insane, and Gregorian plainchant ("medieval muzak"). All this is part of his mission to explain how "mood music" is not some contemporary aberration, but a genre that has existed since the beginning of time. It's also nobly anecdotal. He recounts Eric Satie's desperation at audiences who insisted on giving his 1920 piece *Musique D'Amusement* (Furniture Music) their undivided attention. He explains that elevator music was originally conceived because when lifts were first invented, people were anxious about entering them and needed soothing. He tells of how Heavy Metal guitarist Ted Nugent hated Muzak so much he tabled a \$10 million bid to buy the company just so that he could shut it down. All of this, conveyed in Lanzo's often elegant and acute prose, makes for a recommended read.

However, when Lanzo embarks on extended biographies of the likes of Ray Connell, Percy Faith and Marlene Dietrich, he's as of reinvigorates gives way to the slightly sickly perfume of kitch indulgence. That these people had pretensions to artistic validity does not in themselves make them valid. There is nothing in their backgrounds to suggest that they were

making music for any reason other than functional opportunism. Their perceptions that people can be assuaged by certain musical formulae when its disconcerting elements have been boiled or blended away are akin to Coca-Cola's maximisation that a combination of elements in their product has a singular appeal to the public's sweet tooth. But that's impressive Capitalism, not Art. Let's not be swayed by snobism: This stuff wasn't any good. The "snobs" were right. Even Ted Nugent, for once in his life, was right.

In making claims for mood music, Lanza is unable to back up an improbable enthusiasm with piercing critical language. He bandies terms like "authentic" and "haunting" in an only intensive manner. He relates how one of Ray Connell's singers, during a performance at the White House for President Nixon, staged an impromptu protest at the Vietnam war. Connell offered Nixon a grovelling apology, to which the president dryly responded by pointing out the publicity value of the incident. Are we supposed to thank better Connell for that? What is the story supposed to demonstrate? Lanza doesn't voice-charge.

As a final note of vindication, Lanza quotes orchestral pro arranger Nek Pento, who avers that the music was a "wonderful balm... I like to

think we weren't going to war. We were going to the peace table." To suggest, however, that Muzak is pacifist à la Bertrand Russell as opposed to pacifying à la Vera Lynn is, finally, musical incoherency gone mad. Connell's obsequious behaviour toward the president is proof enough of that.

There is so much that could have been discussed here. The myriad likes of Tom Reehan and Staselski and their appropriators of Muzak, erotica, space age barchetta and music. More on Brian Eno, whose "emotionally ambiguous" Ambient songs make Lanza fret a little. The buggering debate about Deep Listening, a concept some consider a presumptuous imposition on the listener. The way Lanza's beloved period mood music is used in some American offices at night, blasted out in deserted high streets, to prevent youths congegating. The notion of piped music as an infringement of civil liberty, loosely alluded to here but not pursued. And now that we've all gotten used to elections, is there really value and necessity in enduring, as I did mordently in a Birmingham hotel lift, the piped sounds of popular classics underpinned with a disco beat? Rick Pento himself asks of the author, "Why would anyone want to write about Muzak?" At the end of the account I'm not at all sure. □

THE TRUMAN AND EISENHOWER BLUES: AFRICAN-AMERICAN BLUES AND GOSPEL SONGS, 1945-1960

GUIDO VAN Rijn
CONTINUUM PPK 216 £45

BY MATT PYTCHIE

Van Rijn's title here – along with the back cover tag that this is an "exhaustive account of the gospel and blues music of the post-war period" – conjures up expectations of an immense historical portrait of black musical experience in the mid-20th century, an extension of Alan Lomax's epochal work on the Country blues into the electrified world of bright lights and big cities. All the more surprising, then, that this is such a slim volume: 150 sparsely printed pages, most of them devoted to song transscripts and photographs.

However the real goal of the book is not the blues under Truman and Eisenhower, but how Truman and Eisenhauer get into the blues – scanning the available recordings, brief bits and babbles, for clues to the changing political consciousness of black America. The ostensible behind Van Rijn's previous book on Roosevelt and the blues was that this was the first political name to impact widely on contemporary recordings –

inevitably in a positive light. With this volume (a further one is planned on the Kennedy years) a quite different set of issues come to the fore – the economic problems of reconversion after the second world war; the burgeoning though still generally repressed culture of protest; the Korean war; and the atomic bomb: "This is the story of Atom and Eye/Their courtship is causing a great apprehension.../If you don't break up our romance soon/We'll all sit down and go. Soon, boom, boom!" As Van Rijn notes, the Truman years stand out for the nearly unprecedented phenomenon of explicit criticism of a white politician, generally turning on his inability to keep inflation down. The labour has consisted frantically in identifying the material at all! With very few exceptions – although some of these tricks were popular hits at the time, and although many of the protagonists – Loadholtz, JB Lonox, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown – are familiar, these rarely are not the kinds of songs that feature in the regular blues anthologies. Here is a blues that, though it remains suffused with the more familiar and timeless complaints about women and money, is also shot through with historical time, and a more journalistic point of reference. Thus one finds blues like "Reconversion" to a

peace-time economy, or gender wars in the labour market, such as this from Loadholtz: "Every payday come, new chick was as big as me/They women thought that Defense was gonna last all the time.../I wel' tol' you the truth, and its got to be the fact/Since that Defense been gone, that women lose her Catties." Amongst these are songs about the death of white supremacists, Senator Theodore Bilbo, and the widespread Southern lynching of Negro war veterans in 1946. These are only 11 documented blues and gospel recordings from the Truman period that deal with civil rights, and Van Rijn has tracked them all down. The book's second labour is the author's painstaking materialist focus on transcribing the lyrics and tracking down the exact references in these highly elusive song forms.

Much of the book consists simply of sequences of such transcriptions, raising references to tax rates, war bonds, ex-service men, jengen, and so on, with only the barest biographical details of the recording artists thrown in. Here's where the book falls short. What's missing is a more developed sense of artist and consumer, their shifting identities, or the different experience in, say, New Orleans or Chicago. All one gets are the micro-details of these particular songs and their references. The

book is also short on interviews, even though many of the artists were still alive in the 90s, long after the author first became involved in setting up concerts by American blues artists in Holland. There's little, too, on the different labels, though we do have an intriguing snapshot of Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun, the sons of a Turkish diplomat who owned the Atlantic label, one of the few commercial labels prepared to take a stand on racial issues in the early 50s.

However, the book's specialist terms do allow Van Rijn to focus on some original questions – for instance to trace the way a particular issue, atomic science, is reflected quite differently in blues and gospel; in the former, atomic is quickly developed as a sexual pun (boogie woogie pianist Amos Wilson's "Atomic Baby" has "a high potential and a low resistance point"); while for the popular "Jesus His Lite An Atom Bomb" by The Pilgrim Travellers, it's a manifestation of God's power and recalls the threat of future destruction for a sinful mankind, read in conjunction with the CD anthology of the same title published to coincide with the book, what emerges for once is a very different listening experience in which songs step out of the mythical shadows to which the casual or historically estranged listener becomes accustomed, and start hitting you like the news. □

MUSIC AND MATHEMATICS: FROM PYTHAGORAS TO FRACTALS

JOHN FAUVEL, RAYMOND FLOOD & ROBIN WILSON (EDITORS)

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS HB £39.99

BY ANDY HAMILTON

In the sixth century BC, Pythagoras discovered that consonant musical sounds relate to simple number ratios, with a ratio of 2:1 for the octave; dividing a piece of string into thirds and quarters will create an interval of a perfect fifth and perfect fourth respectively. The catalyst for his discovery was said to be a harmonious blacksmith hammering at his forge. Pythagoras ascertained that the masses of the hammerheads were in simple numerical ratios to each other. From this arose the ancient belief that music and mathematics were intimately related – the inspiration for the earliest collection of anecdotes, whose editors interpret them widely to include geometry and acoustics as well.

The Pythagorean discovery is taken as a starting point by Neil Babby's "Tuning And Temperament", which carefully outlines the

modification of the simple Pythagorean scale through Just Intonation to equal temperament, with plenty of diagrams and pictures. In "Musical Cosmology", NF Field discusses the ancient idea of the "music of the spheres", which unified music and science. Astronomer Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) postulated musical harmony to help explain the structure of the universe, drawing on ideas from Plato and the Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy whose cosmology, unlike Kepler's, is Earth-centred. Ptolemy's "Harmonia" is the only surviving ancient text to give an account of the so-called music of the spheres. Though he vehemently denied that the spheres explain planetary motion, Kepler nonetheless looked for Pythagorean musical ratios – small whole numbers. In various quantities of the solar system. His observations are in fact amazingly accurate, but as Field comments, "The real purpose, for today's experts on celestial mechanics, is to explain how the solar system came by these ratios."

If Kepler and his followers had a rather unsophisticated view of musical consonance and dissonance, Athanasius Kircher (1602-80)

did accept some dissonance as natural, arguing that human music has its origins in animal sounds. Perhaps impressed by the belief that South America was the sea of the Garden of Eden, he took seriously the local folktales that the three-toed sloth is able to sing up and down a perfect musical scale. That myth originated from a bestiary with the same habitat, the Common Peacock, which sings a remarkably pure descending diatonic scale.

In "The Science Of Musical Sound", Charles Taylor argues that departures from regular wave patterns tell the brain that a "real" instrument and not an electronically synthesized sound is involved – though he concedes that syntheses can now mimic such irregularities. The most significant departure from regularity is the way the note is intoned. Most instruments involve two coupled systems – the strings of the violin and the body, the head of a clarinet and the pipe, the player's lips and the trumpet. One system drives the other in forced oscillation, and Taylor shows how the delay resulting from the inertia of the second system causes a distinctive "startling transient".

David Fowler discusses German physiologist,

physicist and all round scientist Hermann Von Helmholtz (1821-94). His classic *On The Sensations Of Tone As A Physiological Basis For The Theory Of Music* (1863) is "the single most comprehensive, sustained and profound contribution to musical acoustics", Fowler believes. In a densely argued and insightful if rather too academic article, Fowler pushes the Pythagorean question to which Helmholtz provided the first genuinely scientific answer: Why is there an association between musical sounds and simple whole number ratios? Helmholtz's explanation involves almost all aspects of the problem – acoustical, physiological and psychological – and allows that consonance has changed over time, so that intervals such as the fifth, sixth and seventh gradually became accepted as consonant. He outlined a "roughness" or "unpleasantness curve", which he believed explained the "distribution of dissonances and consonances as actually occurs in nature".

This is a really beautiful book, superbly illustrated and packed with fascinating detail. It should appear in paperback and not languish on library shelves. □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: David Toop talks to Jem Finer about his transition from banjo plucking with The Pogues to computer-decomposed improvisations and music built to last 1000 years



Jem Finer (two from right) and his world: (longshot) views; and defying gravity with *Anamnesis* (below) and *Zero Gentiles* and *Weave/Pervise* (far right)

Jem Finer could have been an accountant. Numerically adept, yet directionally confused, he came within a whisker of following this maligned trade. Then, finding himself in the mainframe computer room at Keele University in 1974, surrounded by giant memory reels and men in white coats, he decided that better prospects than accountancy lay with punchcard programming. Joining computer science studies to a typical 1970s sociology course run by a Marxist professor who insisted that students devise their own education, he finally came to a point of comparing the predictability of his own educational life to the programs he was writing for the computer.

Despite a sense of futility at the time, this was not a bad background for Finer's subsequent career, in which banjo playing with The Pogues has been superseded by Longplayer, his project to compose a piece of music lasting 1000 years, and numerous multimedia experiments with folk music, film, digital image making, live computer music processing, and a band for astrophysicists.

Two events connected with education helped to set this eclectic career in motion. "When I was at university," says Finer, "Brian Eno came and gave a talk, called something like 'Guerilla Warfare And Rock Music'. He was talking about the Americans – when they fight a war they have to flatten a landscape to roll their tanks over it. He was linking that to ways of playing music. He played a Velvet Underground track where the feedback became so intense that it

drowned everything out completely. Most people would have redone the take so that you could hear the drums properly. That was left as it was."

This idea of allowing events their own evolutionary course lay dormant for some time. Before that could develop, he had to find a way into music. As a young guitarist he had been discouraged by trends of the early 1970s, either excessively complicated Prog virtuosity, or the fingerpicking of singer-songwriters such as James Taylor. "After university I went off and did a bit of traveling," he says. "In mid-78, I started to live in London, and ended up in a street near Euston called Burton Street, which was a lot of squats and short term housing. There were a lot of bands there, playing in basements. One day a friend of mine was saying he really wished he'd gone to university. I said I don't know about that, I always regretted not playing an instrument. He said that was easy. He was in this punk band, The Millwall Champs, playing bass, one note per chord root note bass, and he said, come and play with us. I played guitar. So that's how I started playing music. That's when I realised there isn't this great mythology about it."

Eventually, The Pogues coalesced out of this group of people. Shane MacGowan lived in the same house. MacGowan's ferocious post-punk rhythm guitar made a second guitar redundant, so Finer tried a different approach. "It was trying to play guitar like a banjo," he says. "I thought it was stupid, so I bought a banjo. Shane had been in these punk bands and he came

from this Irish background and he was fed up. He'd come home in the middle of the night and put on these Dubliners records, and wanted to play them.

"There was always this myth about The Pogues, that it was all Irish music, but to start with we used to do 'All Tomorrow's Parties', Country things, rockabilly things. I always used to say it was like the restaurants we used to go to – Greek music, Turkish music,

Spanish music. It was before there was something called World Music. Tradition started to be not such a dirty word. I was quite aware of that with folk music. When I was a kid growing up in Cheshire I used to go to a lot of folk things and they were very worthy. But playing these things with The Pogues – they were brilliant songs, great melodies and lyrics. I think that started to make me listen to things very differently."

After some years of success, boredom set in from the routine of playing the same songs night after night. On the tour bus, Finer started tinkering with computers, trying to program some sense into the bleeping capabilities of a Sinclair Spectrum, then using the basic programming language bundled with an Atari to randomise its MIDI output. "Eventually I got a Mac," he says, "and I was surprised that it didn't come bundled with a programming language. The way you worked with computers had gone from writing your own stuff to buying ready-made applications, and I didn't like that. It seemed like some control had been taken away. Then I started doing the odd sound installations for friends who were artists."





These included an hour long installation for eight loudspeakers for Mark Hems's *Wall Of Sound*, and music for an Australian film about garbage trucks, called *Garbo*. Using his Mac, a sampler and an DAT recorder, Riner pieced together the soundtrack from recordings of garbage collection in Camden Town. Commissioned to make music for a cartoon about a character called Toxic Tex, he sampled the garbage trucks to construct a rhythm track, then sang Hank Williams style honky-tonk over the top.

In the same period he had the idea of making *Longplayer*. Commissioned by Artangel and now audible as an installation (on the first weekend of each month) at The Lighthouse, in London's Trinity Buoy Wharf, on listening posts in Alexandria Library in Egypt and Brisbane's Powerhouse, or by Internet stream (longplayer.org), *Longplayer* proposed the challenge of composing a piece of music that would not only last 1000 years, but also be accessible for listening for their lengths of time. As it turned out, the composition was the easy part of the task. "On tour buses, at the end of 94 or 95," he says, "towards the end of being in The Pogues, I'd been thinking about this whole thing of time and how weird it was, wondering how you could use time. I think a lot of that comes from playing music – you're surfing on the edge of time, and things are unravelling. The catalyst was my pestilence, really, with reading all this rubbish about the millennium coming up. The only sense I could see was that there were these 1000 year long

spans of time which no one seemed to be engaging with at all, which were arbitrary in themselves. To me, the interesting thing would be to make something that long, to make it tangible in some way."

"At that time I had my first laptop, a brick of a grey thing with a tiny screen, a little Mac laptop. I'd just got Logic as an upgrade from my old Alan Creator. I was just playing around with it on the bus. I discovered that you could trigger sound inside the Mac, from this cheesy QuickTime synth. Then I started making loops of different lengths, and then I realised this phase loop thing would make more interesting music than the tunes I was typing in. Emergent things would start happening. I realised, when I was thinking one day on the bus, that just by choosing the right lengths of loops you could calculate how long it would be before they'd come into phase again."

This led him both to Steve Reich's early experiments with tape loops, and to an interest in artificial life. Using the MAX programming environment, Riner started to work with ideas such as cellular automata, chaos equations and swimming. After a period of dissatisfaction with MIDI, he was pointed in the direction of James McCartney's audio synthesis programming language, SuperCollider. Frustrated with never being able to finish anything, thanks to Longplayer's focus on long durations, and desperate to break out of the physical inactivity engendered by computer work, Riner linked up his guitar to SuperCollider and found he could teach the computer

to decompose his improvisations in real time.

This capacity to engage with art and science has led to further projects such as the films *Wave/Particle* and *Zero Genes* in collaboration with Anuram Biswas, gorgeous sensory explorations of the effects of varying gravitational fields on matter. Since October 2003, Jim has been artist in residence at the Astrophysics Department of Oxford University. "Everything I did for *Longplayer* was to do with extremes of scale," he says. "I discovered the furthest you can see with your naked eye is 1000 light years, which I thought was quite interesting. When you look to the furthest reaches of space you're seeing 1000 years ago. After *Longplayer* I got interested in what you can do down at quantum mechanical level with sound? An astrophysics department is good because that's a place that deals with black holes, where the very vast and the very small meet."

His residency has led to experiments with radio signals from space, using graphic programming software such as Max/MSP and Jitter to interpret the data. He has also started a group. This has two rules: only members of the Oxford University astrophysics department can join, and the titles of all tunes must relate to astrophysics. If the concept sounds appealing, look out for a group playing Sun Ra and Joe Meek on two guitars, cello and bongos, plus versatile almost account. ☐ Jim Riner's *Gr* and *Visionary Landscapes* (with Andrew Kotting) are out now on B! Rive



Left: Glenn Branca. Right: Philip Guston's portrait of Morton Feldman. Front - To My (1978)

BRANCA ENSEMBLE SYMPHONIES NOS 8 & 10 – LIVE AT THE KITCHEN

AWASTIC DRAMA DVD

BY KEITH MOLINE

Glenn Branca's symphonies for massed guitars are mammoth, cartoonish endurance tests for players and listeners alike. Documenting a 1995 performance of the two works which together comprise *The Mysteries*, perhaps the apotheosis of Branca's exploration of extreme volume and electric density, this rough and ready release on Awastic sees his ensemble extorting some appreciative NYC spectators at its home from home, The Kitchen.

Though most often categorised as the No Wave minimalist par excellence (with due reference to Rhys Chatham), Branca has also been compared to both Penderecki and Bröckner in his fondness for huge blocks of forbiddingly dramatic sound. These loom like giant molophins for minutes or end before giant shifting position and then hovering once more. Of course, this music only seems static to those unwilling or unable to enter inside it and succumb. In fact its overtones are constantly being stirred and blurred by the composer's masterly hand, its tensions stepped up incrementally, imperceptibly from a series of plateaus, each of which seems to exist at a level of unexpressable intensity.

These symphonies, composed in 1982 and 1994, marked a return to the earthen terrain of his early pieces like *Lesson No 2* and *The Ascension* after the following, notorious overtone experimentation of the minimalist works like *Symphony No 6* (which presaged the recent, less tumultuous orchestral pieces). Vigil Moorefield's drums pound with a Bon Iver-esque rock swing behind the rare frenetically strummed guitars, as the familiar phantom metrics meditate obscurely from the chromatic tidal surges of steel-string power. The enormous seismos movement of *No 8 (Spiritual Anxiety)* may well represent Branca's greatest achievement to date.

It is a measure of the quality of these performances that the music sound and primitive visuals fail to blunt their attack. Sure, it

would have been nice to have more than three or four camera angles and a director/editor conversant enough with the material to show us which players were making which sounds. Some might find themselves disappointed that this democratic act is performed by studious mousie and floppy-haired George lads rather than raters wearing boinkin' hats. But to watch Branca conducting, engorged by waves of noise, his body seemingly wracked by ever-escalating agonies, clutching his fists as if summoning all the angels and devils in Heaven and Hell, is an irmissible thrill.

MORTON FELDMAN/ PHILIP GUSTON LONDON ROYAL ACADEMY OF THE ARTS UK

BY BRIAN MARSHY

Opportunities to hear a performance of Morton Feldman's lengthy composition *To My Guston* (1984) are few and far between. For it to be played in the midst of a major Guston painting retrospective is never still. To begin the evening, Masa Meyer, Guston's daughter, relates how Feldman and Guston's friendship fell apart in 1970. Feldman was dismayed by the figurative work that Guston exhibited that year – carabiner paintings that addressed the social political and real realities of America during the late 1960s. Guston had found it impossible to ignore what his country had become, and painting was the only way in which he could express his disquiet. Abstract expressionism – of which he was a major exponent along with De Kooning, Rothko and Pollock – was an inadequate vehicle for social commentary – art had to change. Feldman considered this a betrayal, and heated arguments led to a rift. Though both men regretted this, they never spoke to each other again. Guston's famous portrait of Feldman, a mid shot of a head in half profile, smoking a lot while cigarette, is testimony to his feelings. Entitled *Friend – To My* (1978), it shows the composer with his face avated.

This portrait hangs just a few metres from



where the instruments have been set up. As Nicolas Hodges (piano), Mario Cardi (flutes) and Richard Benfield (tuned percussion) work through Feldman's delicate and quietly meditative composition, the audience is allowed to wander round the exhibition, though some people remain seated throughout the entire performance, a tad over four hours, as if mesmerised.

The first room is devoted to Guston's early work. If one can sum it up in a phrase, it's social realism meets Giorgio De Chirico at the gross root of the Italian Renaissance. By the late 1960s his concerns had come full circle, but by then his work was richer, freer of denotation, and his emotional involvement in it was total. By now it has become impossible to make a clear distinction between Guston and his subjects. When the Ku Klux Klansmen of *Drawing for Contractors* (1960) return, their anonymity does not precisely resurface. The cigarette-smoking Klansman in *By the Window* (1968) looks curiously resolute, as though he has come to realise what an absurd figure he cuts.

What Feldman loved best were Guston's abstract expressionist paintings, from between 1947–65, and it's here that one finds the strongest correlation between their work. Both manifest doubt and uncertainty in Feldman's elegant musical homage to Guston, composed four years after the painter's death; the instruments work independently on their own materials, and occasionally come together in unexpected ways. Guston, notwithstanding, this is a difficult piece to play, but the result was hardly a flat-out mess or a misguided entry throughout. Of an audience nearly 200-strong when the concert began, 130 saw it through to the end and gave Hodges, Cardi and Benfield a thunderous ovation.

FROM ZERO: FOUR FILMS ON JOHN CAGE

MODE 108 DVD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Had he survived into the late 1990s, the possibilities of DVD technology for double-

blading picture and sound would no doubt have sparked John Cage's imagination. New York based Mode Records are troubleshooting the potential of DVD for blurring the distinction between musical documentary and performance; this anthology of films by Dutch film maker Frank Scheller and ex-Cage assistant Andrew Culver was made during the last decade of Cage's life and follows Mode's DVD of Morton Feldman's *String Quartet No 2*. New releases on Elliott Carter, Morton Subotnick and Luciano Berio are all forthcoming.

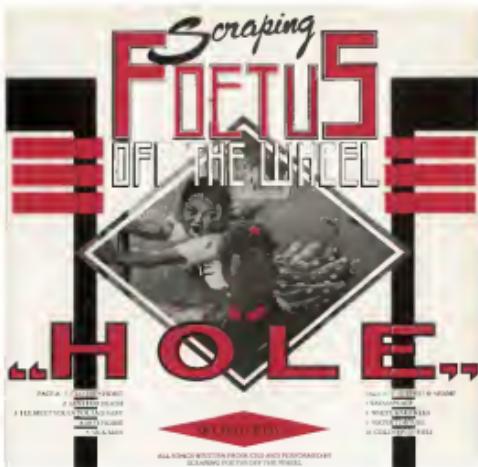
The first film, *19 Questions*, is a witty, revealing portrait. Here Cage was 'interviewed' using textually generated questions from a list of topics and durations. According to the dictates of the *19 Questions*, Cage was given just one second to talk about Ottmar Holtz, but 40 seconds to discuss Ronald Reagan. His aphoristic thoughts on the latter – paraphrased as 'He's such a bad president that he's good for democracy because people will turn to anarchic We hope for a worse president next time' – encapsulate the Cagean aesthetic. Concreteness is more creative than intention, silence more interesting than sound, and Cage got a worse president, not time.

Such tension also underpins Scheller's filmed performance of Cage's ten 'number' pieces. Fourteen, Scheller worked with Andrew Culver to produce equivalent directions for the lighting engineers and cameramen to Cage's instructions for the musicians. The intense suspense has created a unique marriage of music and film. As Cage's sounds ebb and flow out of control and instrumental sounds fade by chance, the picture dissolves from incidental detail framed from oblique angles, to frames of pure light.

In *Overpopulation And Art*, Cage's spoken performance of this mesmeric poem is overlaid with his piece *Rockagi* and images of the two locations in Manhattan and New York State where he lived. Again, the theme of Cage's poem is his belief in 'irreparable anomaly'. Cage's lecture was made at the end of his life and is a last philosophical will and testament. Hearing it against Rycroft and with Scheller's accompanying images transforms it into a moving valedictory statement. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Robin Rimbaud/Scanner



SCRAPING FOETUS OFF THE WHEEL

SOME INNOCENT 1984

DESIGNED BY JIM THIRLWELL

Was it the continuing shape-shifting identity of Jim Thirlwell or the brilliantly bold artwork that drew me first to the work of *Foetus*? It had to be a combination of the two. Whether he was *Foetus Over Frisco*, *Philip And His Foetus*, *Vibration*, *Foetus Under Glass*, *The Foetus All-*

Hole or countless other absurdly surreal personae, since 1981 Thirlwell has continued to present a consistency in his sloganizing artwork and movement soundtrack.

In 1984, as a student I signed up to the confrontational and provocative Industrial school of Test Dept, SPK, Neubuster and Thirliving Grade. He'd acted as a fire in the darkness of a common gloom. It was also, bizarrely enough, a record that my mother bought me for my birthday. With a strictly limited colour palette of red,



SCRAPING FOETUS OFF THE WHEEL

white and black, the LP sleeve blended Chinese art and hand lettering, marring Soviet Constructivism with Ray Lichtenstein against the flat tonal dropout of an Andy Warhol print. Blackly, even blood red planes incarnated Eastern propaganda, comic books and packaging, the style directly reflecting a distorted music that was terminally flickering between a nauseous joke and Hammer Horror drama. Issued on a label credited as "Self Immolation" and with the song titles prominently displayed on

the front cover, a retching, sick world was suggested of horror, death, disease and murder; "Water Torture", "Cold Day In Hell", "Last For Descent" (yes, an Iggy Pop parody) and "Skullmen".

He was a work of genius, a plastic tapestry of visceral intensity and conceptual intelligence, mirrored in its forthright artwork. Even his sturmiest criss, my mother marveled at the spectacle of the sleeve, repeating how "clever" it was. You see, even though it wasn't Johnnie Ray or Gilbert O'Sullivan, it had merit. □

Go To:

New York's PS1 Gallery, an affiliate of the city's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), has just gone live with an Internet-only radio station that aims to offer 24-7 coverage of a wide range of art, music and culture. wps1.org includes discussions around the aesthetics and economics of art and literature, predictions and readings from a clairvoyant, performances broadcast live from the Bowery Poetry Club, arts and music news from correspondents across the world, and one-off broadcasts of live concerts. The station will also host a hefty chunk of archive recordings, including selections from New York Mills tape collection featuring readings by Marcel Duchamp, Spalding Gray, Jasper Johns, William Burroughs and many more. Guitars! Elliott Sharp has been handling the reins of the music section of the station, and music programmes will feature the greats of contemporary sound from John Cage and David Grabb to William Basinski and Neko Case, while Sharp will present his own regular slot, *Musica Mathematica*. All scheduling information can be found on the site.

In 1993 artist Douglas Gordon stretched Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* to 24 hours, introducing some of Gordon's recurring themes such as authorship and authenticity, memory and repetition. Norwegian sound artist Leif Inge (www.instein02.no/9/7/) has now given Beethoven's mammoth *Symphony No 9* a similar treatment. Inge's piece *9 Beet Streich* stretches the symphony into a 24-hour marathon with no attention in pitch. Part of a sound installation, the piece was shown last month at the Theo Kugler Foundation, a 39,000 square foot building in Madison, Wisconsin, USA, and his site is offering the full work for streaming or download. *Table Of The Elements* (www.tableoftheelements.com) follow up the installation with a double DVD release of the piece this summer, divided up into sections lasting 80 minutes apiece.

Leif Inge also features currently on *Dopeound* (www.dopeound.org), an online label providing high-fidelity MP3 files by a pod of new artists. Using an open source 'copyleft' model, all the works here are licensed under the Creative Commons licence

([wwwcreativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org)), which means you are free to download works, make copies, share, remix, and rearrange them as you wish. You only have to make sure you credit the source, and that any derivative works are licensed under the same law.

While you wait for the new Sonic Youth album *Sonic Nurse* to arrive, point your mouse to *Seasucker* (www.seasucker.com), an unofficial fan site with a wealth of downloads: everything from rarities such as live recordings from David Bowie's 50th birthday, rarely heard fall cover songs played on a Peel Session back in 1988, Mudhoney and Nirvana cover songs, concert footage, tour films, an appearance on the *Canadian TV Show*, and lots more. If that wasn't entertainment enough, a new game is currently doing the rounds in avant circuit: *2D Velvet Underground Death Chase* (www.dandelion.com/games/velvets/level1.htm) lets you play the part of a running biker trying to avoid stay members of The Velvet Underground, who are trying to intoxicate you with their drugs. Stay clear or get stoned.

ANNE HILDE NISET & RDB YOUNG

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



No Fun in Brooklyn with (left to right) Kris Gordon, Thurston Moore, Arthur Doyle and Wolf Eyes

NO FUN FEST NEW YORK NORTH SIX USA

BY GEETA DAWALI

There is, of course, the inherent joie in calling three consecutive days of unrelenting noise, rock tenorising, laptop programmed pummeling, and free jazz skoshing the No Fun Fest. But at its best, the maniacal event, piloted by Monochrom wandelkind Carlos Gibson, demonstrated the vitality — and, yes, the fun — in the burgeoning underground noise scene. Spanning over 30 sets, the event crystallized the tiny but thriving scenes in various cities, joining them under a single banner. The festival showed how mathematically and sonically noise could be, by showcasing a number of different conceptual approaches to constructing noise; a type of music too often lied away as being monolithic.

Even the whimsical names of the groups themselves — Laundry Room Squashers, Rubber-D-Cement, Burning Star Core, Humectant Interruption, Air Conditioning, Hair Pollio, to name a few — hinted at the scene's eclecticism. Several Some Youths members were cut in full force, contributing to the carnival with three solid improvisational units: the Thurston Moore/Cino Cerosimo/Jim D'Rourke/Paul Flaherty Dream Aldous Unit; Kim Gordon And The Sweet Ride (featuring Lee Mox, Jim D'Rourke, and DJ Dilve);

and the Lee Ranaldo/Roger Miller (of Mission Of Burma)/William Hooker Iho, Sightings, Double Leopards, Nautical Airlines, Arthur Doyle Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, The Wren's Alan Licht, Magg outfit-of-towners Pita and Massimo, and the much-revered return of cult act To Live And Shave In LA were some other prime draws. But the true headliners — the dark knights of the scene — were want-noise poster-boys Wolf Eyes, who set only contributed three excellent side projects to the event (Aaron Dillaway Dead Machines, and Miscreant), but also staged the No Fun Fest's mindblowing finale.

The dark, musty Brooklyn venue was packed to capacity. The small stage in the poetry lit, cramped basement felt like bang at someone's house, and the large space upstairs had the whiff of a high school gymnasium. Scruffy beards abounded, women were noticeably the minority in the audience and on stage, though this improved as the weekend progressed.

On Friday, Moore's guitar theatrics often upstaged the other improvisers in The Dream Aktion Unit, but the stormy drummer-dyno-dyno Cerosimo was the group's heart. O'Reilly famously massed an array of oscillators, snarled dropping down his brow, and Rutherford let loose manic sparts of saxophones. Their nailily kinetic performance made the subsequent blast, by Pita seem curiously stiff and immobile.

On Saturday, The Sweet Ride offered a welcome interruption from the mostly male mood, with improvisation that was as soft as it was confrontational. Gordon unleashed some splendid guitar work while delving into sheets about love and sex, and Mox's laptop triggered organic sounds — rumbling waterfalls, emulsions of ocean waves. O'Rourke and Dilve accented but never eclipsed Gordon and Mox, letting them craft spellbinding grooves. Downstairs, The Japanese Karaoke Albatross Ensemble, a tremendous Providence outfit, whipped crocodiles into breathless pandemonium.

To Live And Shave In LA offered one of the most compelling and hilarious spectacles. No one knew what to expect, and most just watched, speechless, as the miles, part comedy act, part seeing sonic tumult, erupted. Singer Tori Smith howled and danced jerily to a blizzard of pounding breakbeats and guitar.

Sightings played a ferocious set, aided in no small part by a ferocious powerhouse percussionist. Sicilian lapguitar Massimo began with what sounded like a screwed and chopped version of Duran Duran's "Planet Earth." Slashing the keyboard line down to a crawl had the effect of congealing the original into something dense and glorious. His set was fascinating, full of Metal riffs flickering on the verge of familiarity, and vaguely derisible sounds condensed into a dotted, coxing alien mass.

In Ronaldo's trio, Ranaldo was technically on guitar, but he appeared more concerned with creating amplifier feedbacks. Miller played bass and Hooker commanded the drums. Downstairs, Pengo was holding audiences rapt with an Ambient house drif.

When headliners Wolf Eyes began their ferocious din, it sounded like a helicopter landing on stage. The masters of anologue, they used several synths crammed with old broken eight-tracks, red to reds, oscillators, and various household electronics to blaring effect. Ribbons of wild, berbling melodies ran through, reminiscent of Animal Collective or Black Dice. But melodic leanings were matched with heavy, charged, crashing tones, occasionally cut up into rhythms that sounded like a rattling washing machine under extreme amplification. At one point microphones appeared to be swinging from wires in an inadvertent tribute to Steve Reich's *Pendulum Music*. Guitars gonged instead on the stage, but the grasp didn't bash cymbals so much, they gently coaxed them into submission. Part Death Metal, part Throbbing Gristle, part Bowdoin-inspired Ambient blues, they completely defied any attempts at categorization. Their set coalesced all the varying strains of noise over the weekend into a single unstoppable force, leaving audiences dead and hoping for more "no fun" in the future. □





Ghosts but goodie: Jean-Jacques Perrey (with elephant) and David Axelrod

ETHER: JEAN-JACQUES PERREY/LUKE VIBERT/HANS JOACHIM ROEDELIUS
LONDON QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL
UK

ETHER: DAVID AXELROD & THE ORCHESTRA
LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL
UK

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Two nights ago two guys of respectable years with two very different stories to tell, but manifesting distinctly complimentary responses to the age they now find themselves sampled and held in Equal parts travelling salesman and cabaret artist, Jean-Jacques Perrey, whose names and supporters have included Edith Piaf, Jean Cocteau and Walt Disney managed to keep an audience entertained with little more than a reel-to-reel tape recorder and a staffed toy elephant. Former bassist David Axelrod, whose inspired studio arrangements have graced releases by Lou Rawls, Canned Heat, Aretha Franklin, David McCullum and The Electric Prunes, kept his listeners enthralled simply by keeping his back to them.

You really have to put in some serious time to hone your act down to such simple parameters. At the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Hans Joachim Roedelius with Tim Story gave a meditative recital in which keyboardless invention and tinkling arpeggios for various piano keyboards and violins were allowed to build up, lose focus and then regroup again. Although distinctly pastoral in their gradual unfolding, there was a genuine austerity and steel to each piece that was reflected in the quiet discipline and concern over their presentation.

What followed after the interval may have seemed the complete antithesis to this, but its effect was no less controlled. Looking dapper in a double-breasted suit and clutching his toy elephant, Jean-Jacques Perrey walked onstage to a hero's welcome. It wasn't deserved. This, after all, was the man who archived over 5000 separate sounds to be manipulated on tape into rhythms and melodies; who, by his own admission, spent 72 hours splicing together field recordings of birds into a two-minute meditation of Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Flight of the Bumblebee*. "If I tell you my life it would be too long," Perrey explained in cheerfully lapsed English at the

start of what was more of an informal address interspersed with recorded musical outbursts rather than a concert performance. Instead he told anecdotes, waved his elephant 'Dif' around, pointed off the subject, came back to it again, often became lost for words but was always charming. Finally, Perrey joined Luke Vibert in a rubber-suited take on "Faire Vivre" for basso and synthesizer from their forthcoming *Mogadishu* album. It was, as Perrey said of his own soon to be published biography, "par triste", though his opening bars have been given heavy sampled rotation by Dr Dre, plus 'secret' guest singer Richard Ashcroft, who strode onstage amidst delighted cries of "at least it's not Thom Yorke" to deliver a thoughtful rendition of "Holy As You" from The Electric Prunes' 1968 release *Orfeo*. All the while, Meanwhile, Axelrod remained at the podium, deeply immersed in following the score for each arrangement, occasionally raising an arm or clashing at the air with a thin hand to indicate a strengthening of effect. At the end of the evening, having quietly but poignantly announced that there would be no encore, he left the stage, once again without fanfare. By then, however, it was pretty clear that he didn't need one. He was the fanfare. □

RADU MALFATTI & TAKU SUGIMOTO
PARIS INSTANTS CHAVIRÉS
FRANCE

BY DAN WARBURTON

In the 1980s, pastilles were often drawn between music and material arts by improvisers as diverse as Steve Coleman and John Zorn, but today it seems chess has become something of a metaphor for the slow-motion Improv guitarist Taku Sugimoto and trombonist Radu Malfatti have chosen to explore Sugimoto's *An Old Fashioned Duet* with Burkhard Stangl (Sub Music 2001) come with a photograph of the two men staring intently at a game in progress, and his concert with Malfatti that appears as disc two of *Futatsu*, the pair's recent double album on the Improvised Music From Japan label, was staged literally with a chess match. As the door to the Instants Chavirés swing open tonight to let in the handful of punters who had

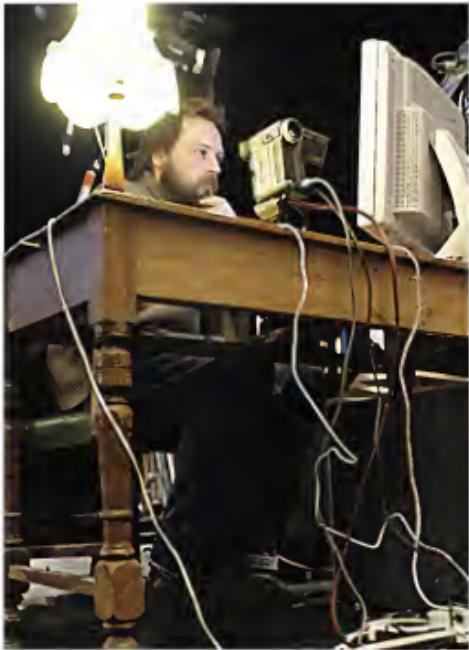
been patiently queuing outside, it wasn't exactly surprising then to find Malfatti and Sugimoto huddled over a chessboard.

Having found "Hitozu", Futatsu's first disc, extremely sparse even for my tastes – actual notes represent less than eight per cent of its total duration – the prospect of listening to the Instants Chavirés Dige for an evening was not an enticing one. However, not only was the offending machine unplugged for the duration of the one hour set (aopwatch timed by Malfatti, as is his wont), but the musicians were, by their standards, unusually verbose: counting each note of Sugimoto's dyads and excluding one unexpected long breath from Malfatti, each man equally contributed no fewer than 67 notes ("We've never played so much before!" Malfatti beamed as he walked offstage. "This was like Heave Metal!"). Such talk of statistics and percentages is, of course, rather dumb, even vulgar: nobody would think

of calculating the area of black pigment as opposed to white printed canvas on a Franz Kline painting – as if there were better. What makes Kline's art work is the terrific tension between those thick black lines and the surrounding white space, and taught a similar tension was palpable in the silence, one which lasted longer than 45 seconds (as opposed to several minutes on "Hitozu"), allowing the listeners to retain the pitch information as the piece progressed from one tiny constellation of notes to the next. We ultimately saw nothing Webern.

You average Metal fans could have had a hard time, but Webern might have appreciated the acute ear for pitch and impeccable sense of timing that established Sugimoto as a major player on the scene at the end of the 1990s. Taku's concert was welcome proof that, despite his progressive and radical stamping away of everything but the absolutely essential,

impressive bulk of them taken from his *Songs Of Innocence and Songs Of Experience* LPs, released at the end of the 1960s. As is appropriate, Blake's poems suit Axelrod perfectly. They share a similarly uncompromising love and an angry wistful, "Holy Thursday", "Ultron", "The Sick Rose", "London" and "The Human Abstract" formed an expansive central sequence during the latter half of act. Prior to that, the audience had been coaxed through "The Edge", whose opening bars have been given heavy sampled rotation by Dr Dre, plus 'secret' guest singer Richard Ashcroft, who strode onstage amidst delighted cries of "at least it's not Thom Yorke" to deliver a thoughtful rendition of "Holy As You" from The Electric Prunes' 1968 release *Orfeo*. All the while, Meanwhile, Axelrod remained at the podium, deeply immersed in following the score for each arrangement, occasionally raising an arm or clashing at the air with a thin hand to indicate a strengthening of effect. At the end of the evening, having quietly but poignantly announced that there would be no encore, he left the stage, once again without fanfare. By then, however, it was pretty clear that he didn't need one. He was the fanfare. □



**LONDON SINFONIETTA/
SQUAREPUSHER/
JAMIE LIDELL
COVENTRY WARWICK ARTS
CENTRE**

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

His tour went out of its way to marry classical and club, orchestral and electronic conditions. The crowd applauded when conductor Jürgen Hempel entered. They stamped their feet and quaffed beer to the sound of Jamie Lidell. Right in front of the speaker stacks, a lone dancer jogged to Squarepusher's Continuous Traffic, tramped the aisles, squeaky steps becoming a crucial element during the evening's most silent pieces.

London's first festival has provided the impetus for this pairing of the spheres, building on the success of 2003's Warp Works & 20th Century Masters concert at the Royal Festival Hall. Examining any sense of separation can give a

false impression, though. The resounding success of this venture was that the supposedly antifriendly disciplines succeeded in combining with a visceral intimacy blended and bonded into a harmonic whole that wasn't completely without a sense of tension.

The initial contrast was provided by Aphex Twin, Edgardo Vásquez and Squarepusher, the Warp artists filtered through smaller subdivisions of The Sinfonietta.

Tom 'Squarepusher' Jefferisone milked his own absurdity, clad in top hat and tails, averting our front to sit at his antique triple, laid out with monitor, mouse, lamp with lampsshade and a vase of flowers. He was awarded with phenomenal volume, sending out wall-popping bass frequencies that rattled the walls and flattered the ears. He opened with light, contrived bunches of noisy noise, compacted into deliberately ordered patterns. Then he cranked up the beats, crumping at full power, as potent that he left the audience in a dazed, blithetized state.



The Flat Earth contributed most of the visuals, but the filmic high point arrived straight after Squarepusher's set. Fernand Léger's 1924 *Ballet Mécanique* retained its original George Antheil score. The London Sinfonietta launched a veritable attack on the manuscript, playing with a searing edge, flying, striking, thudding in, inflamed by the competitive sloss-rush that followed Squarepusher's own bombastic release. The piece sounded as though it was penned last week.

The second half included two Steve Reich works, *Violin Phase* and *Six Marimbas*, acting as a smoothed out surround to Jamie Lidell's towering slot. The Berlin based singer bounded out like a damaged cruise line container, scrunching around in a jacket covered with disc tabs, complete with stitched on CDs. Like a cross between Liberace and Lee Perry, his scuttling voice completely conventional, following the contemporary R&B blueprint, but then he started to sample himself, chopping and

chunting, grafting his own vocal matter to great wads of electro chaos, debasing the alertness of his own voice. Lidell's sleek, his locks like a peering teenager, caught on real-time video by Paolo Russo, who was sprawled with his back to the crowd, scratching images into pictorial cutie steps, mixed with a speeding urban collage. Lidell sputtered and doored, giving up more of his meat being, like the most extraordinary confrontation between conventional and anti-conventional, an unsetting hybrid that's equally lightweight and challenging.

And then, to climax, no wooden classical trimmings for The London Sinfonietta, as Kenneth Haslam's arrangement of Aphex Twin's "Polygen Wardow" sounds completely neutral, projected with rhythmic bite, rising up to an intensified pitch. Everyone clearly understands each other on an instinctive level, unlike so many of these well-intentioned yet too-structured confrontations. □

FUSELEEDS04

LEEDS VARIOUS VENUES

144

No longer a centre of the woollen industry, Leeds's accent attempts to reinvent itself and to concentrate on promoting the city as a giant shopping centre cum superclub. So it's refreshing to see the inaugural FUSE festival presented under the banner "Experiences In New Music": a slogan which will sound vaguely familiar to Nine readers and one which boldly states Leeds's often overlooked claim to recognition in the cultural arena.

A key element of the festival was new commissions and collaborations, an agenda highlighted by the opening event featuring the London Sinfonietta. Yet the first half of this concert seemed strangely cautious. Festival director Django Baret's Unstoppable Voon Concerto – which moved from playful jinkiness to a jaunty showbiz finale – was modest in outlook but stayed rooted within the institution of the soloist with orchestral accompaniment, as did the condemned arrangement of Markus Stockhausen's bassett horn piece *Portrait für Anna*. A performance of Franz Zappa's *Jazz from Hell* followed, Beane having transcribed its wiffly rhythms, and dug at jazz clichés such as finger clicking, from sardonic to Milt orchestrated.

Squarepusher (far left); Anouka Cuni and Werner Durand's *Aubreyans* at Other Minds

OTHER MINDS

SAN FRANCISCO VARIOUS
VENUES

USA

For the last decade, San Francisco's Other Minds festival has brought Bay Area denizens tasteful programmes of New Music that seek expression as much as experience. Founded by the composer Charles Ammann along self-consciously West Coast lines ("other minds" is a Capricci), OM midwives an attractive informality; it's the kind of music festival where guys with beards take their shoes off for the show. A chummy intimacy sadness from performers and composers as well, a conviviality no doubt in part due to the time they spend together in the mountains before the festival, swapping sounds and noises at an artist retreat that, yes, has Neil Youngs farm.

Over the course of three nights of performances, along with some films and panel discussions, OM 10 achieved that familiar festival pizzazz: the amazing mixed bag. The first evening opened strongly with the Armenian composer and pianist Tigran Mansurian, who offered up an original song and a handful of adapted Komitas mutations of Armenian folk tunes. Supported by the dark, dulcet tones of violinist Kaja Knudsen and the broad, bold

technically impressive but with a whiff of the superficial. The same questions bugged to be asked of Kate Rusby's performance in the second half, where the Sinfonietta's sympathetic strings and plangent woodwind added little to her and accompanist John McCusker's emotive songs.

It was the risqué collaborations that paid off. Première Ballade was commissioned in honour of Evans' Parker's imminent 60th birthday. 60 compositions each contributed a bar, arranged by Bates into a piece which Parker would hear for the first time onstage and improvise with. Accompanied by Paul Lydon on drums, Parker on tenor sax solted tentatively but soon rose to the challenge, picking up and absorbing the orchestral phrasings, elaborating during the thoughtful pause pauses and building to a celebratory flourish whilst both Lydon and the orchestra held

Meawis, Redhod guitar Jonny Greenwood's Shear was a piece requiring the festival organisers to source not one, but two ondes martenots. A 1920s synthesiser combining a keyboard with input based on the conductivity of human skin, the instruments sounded more rotest than the theremin's unearthly wail, binaural vibrato with a non-nasal, resonant tone. Shear was a blustering, pacesetting BBC Radiophonic Workshop-style moments of dissonance with sweet melodies that recalled the romantic era of classical music. Valerie Hanmer-Clauses and

Bruno Rauwolf's skilful playing proved that the oboe must not deserve more than to be confined to a file marked 'obscure novelty instruments'.

That role was filled by the octobass, making its appearance with the Nonesuch Quartet. Looking something like a Maccus made of a six-string, this LED-Li-prinkie moved up and down the long strings attached to the frame, controlled by a MIDI box. The contrast between the resulting multi-layered, eerie humming — reminiscent at times of *Unholy* — and the string quartet sound was made explicit in the piece, *Dies Ex Machina*, a tongue-in-cheek tribute to pulp sci-fi in which the quartet was cast as the “Earthlings” and the apeshadow as the “Alien Monks.” Meanwhile, John Zorn’s Dead Man saw the quartet turn their attention to the dynamics of sadomasochism. 13 short sections signified pain and release through flurries of scraping, plucking and harmonics, and more literally through the whip-like flicking of the players’ bows.

Ye La Teng and Gorky's Zyptic Mynd pulled in a large crowd. Perhaps to compensate for the tiered seating, Gorky's tempered their recent reliance on bittersweet balladry with some Krautrock-inspired noise mischief: a dangerous-looking two-handed leap during a string-out "Sweet Johnny" saw Euros Childs earn his place on the select list of keyboard macking frontmen. Ye La Teng were in equally abrasive mood, with Kaplans spending long periods wrestling

feedback from his guitar and an unapologetically loud version of "Georgia on My Tengo". In person, however, they were effervescent, showing off synchronized dance moves and inviting the audience to spill into the space between the seats and themselves. A large crowd promptly obeyed, providing dancing accompaniment to the Sun Ra cover "Nuclear War", whilst a stripped-down, punchy cover of "Astroblitz" was squeezed in before the unrelenting raising of the lights.

The final night saw Andy Kershaw play Hatton Big Hop, although Wreckless Eric was a puzzling inclusion: his bitter, washed-up punk persona provoked no crowd reaction beyond embarrassed indifference. Sensational stuff. Daena J met with a better reception, their three MCs coming out with rapid fire messages of positivity and debt-free harmony singing, backed by the DJ's optimistic dancehall tracks.

Although Bill Fentress's sound installation *Primal Soundings* — in which the subterranean gurgling of the river Aire flowed between four speakers placed outside the city art gallery — caught the attention of many lurching workers, it was unfortunate that many of the festival's events were confined to the self-styled "Cultural Quarter on the fringe of the city centre". Nevertheless, *Fuse* provided much to be excited by, especially the next will take this year's promising foundations and reach out to find those "experiences in new music" in all parts of the city. □

OTHER MINDS
SAN FRANCISCO VARIOUS

Davel on vibes, Mansurian presented spare songs of loss and exile with an exquisite melancholy (these pieces have found their proper home with ECM). As Kashkashian noted onstage, Mansurian "is not a singer," and though his falsetto could sometimes be hard to take, his breathy and swooning vocal called up feelings of eerie earthiness and otherworldly, like a dying centaur's plaint echoing down from some mountain pass.

The West Coast has long fancied music that lie beyond Western music, and the fascination, with its inevitable exotic undertones, plays into GOM's programming. The second half of Thursday night was taken up with "The Heart Ain't Now," an ambitious structured improvisation "composed" (or whatever you want) by Jon Reiskin of the RTWVA sax quartet for Rova and a handful of arrange-
ments of Asian traditional instruments. The latter, it must be said, sounded more than the saxes; Sung Won Park, playing two kayagum, was particularly flexed, stretching and mangling his strings as Jeffing Chen supported him with walking, succulent solos on the Chinese erhu. But while individual solos often blew the mind — especially an incendiary and percussive pass by the pipe mastermind Min Xun-Fen — the performers rarely hit the points of spontaneous fusion that realize such collective enthrallments.

A more felicitous if romantic engagement with another music occurred during the festival's superb Friday night, which presented, along with performances by Joan Jeanneraud and the phenomenally gifted German accordionist, Stefan Hasinger, the US premiere of Annea Lockwood's *Dunedin's Autobiography*, a piece in one movement by a host of Western women to sensually study, an austerely minimalist style of classical North Indian music; whatever the technicalities of her vocal control, she sounds like a masterpiece to me, but with a vulnerability that undercuts the machismo that is mastery's trap. Far Ashtoyana, she and Dunedin, a minimalist, who makes instruments from plagues and PVC, created a high-concept multimedia "Song Of Hours" that followed the diurnal cycle of rage from sunrise to night. Moving with heuristic precision inside a cylindrical screen etched with projections by Sven Sjölin, Carr performed eight songs as Dunedin responded, in real time, with reverberant loops and drabs bristling with unreleased samples of Curn's wine-dark voice. At times, these layers of voice and image began to flutter like rose petals in the winds of time, and without budging from his seat, this reviewer simply left the hall.

French electroacoustic composer of the old school, Francis Dhomont took up his seat behind a mixer in the middle of the audience, a single spot illuminating his white of hair as his ten fingers projected a cornucopia of sounds through 12 speakers placed throughout the hall. Earlier in the day, the local composer Stanley Shaft, who regularly presents a "total concept experience" in his specially designed Auditorium on Bush Street, spoke elegantly about electronics and the orchestration of space, of space as a language. Dhomont spoke it like a mesmerist with charm, making robot scots, roaring Airlines of outcomes, a screeching flock of Fournier transforms, and what I swear was the massed choir from The Orb's "Little Purple Clouds".

So it was something of a dawner to move, in the latter half of the evening, from Dhonoma's bands hotel to the rather pedestrian jazz zone mapped by Alex Blake and his nowish combo. Blake plays bass with Randy Weston, and when alone he attacked his gorgeously 19th century bass with brazen, propulsive force. But his group's music rarely left the supper-club, and when Blake took up an electric one for another solo, a slick and deeply unfortunate Beatles medley emerged. It was a stark reminder of the limits of fusion and the eclectic. Even in California, one can't escape the E.L.



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+ more to be announced.

Le Weekend is part of Scotland's Experimental Music Partnership which is: Instal [15-17 Oct @ The Arches]; Free Radicals [3-6 Nov @ CCA]; Kill Your Timid Notion [10-12 Dec @ DCA]. Check out www.leweekendfestival.com for more info, offers + tickets.



The Analysis of Beauty Disinformation

South Hill Park, Bracknell
10 April to 9 May 2004

"People are fascinated by this work; it brings a shiver, a sudden recognition of death, perhaps as though we have seen or heard our own ghost" Jeff Noon
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brighton festival

ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION
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Asian Dub Foundation will play its controversial film about guerilla warfare in an exclusive commission by Brighton Festival Sat 1 May, £16

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AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB

Sun 23 May 7.45pm QEH
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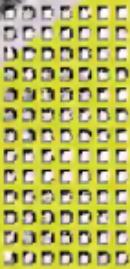


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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk. Compiled by Phil England



Throbbing Gristle at Re:TO: Part of Le Weekend



UK festivals

THE BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

BRIGHTON

Musical highlights of this seaside festival include Asian Dub Foundation's live soundtrack to the Battle Of Algiers (1 May, 5.30pm & 9.30pm), Torz Gustavson Trio (4), Apollo Saxophone Quartet play Keith Tippett, Barbara Thompson and others (7), Bill Cobham's The Art Of 5 plus Joe Zawinul and The Zawinul Syndicate (9), Plaid/Bob James (14), Mexican band Keith Tippett solo (16), Myrr Nasta, Modestos Hugoas and Minuccia Costa (19) and Dave Daring & The Banan Singers from Ipanema (20). Brighton various venues, times and prices, 01273 709 709, www.brighton-festival.org.uk

FREEDOM OF THE CITY

LONDON

The main event in London's Improv calendar is this annual weekend festival. It begins with two historic jazz JMW with Keith Rowe, Eddie Prower and John Tilbury and MFV featuring Alva Noto, Federic Rausell and Richard Belbeau, along with a younger group, The World Book featuring Ross Lamberti, John Lely and Seymour Wright (1 May, 20am). The weekend continues with Roger Smith & Lewis Meltzer, Cive Bell & Sykes Hawlett, Alex Wendl/Luke Borde/Simon Felly/Steve Hobbs, Quasimodo featuring John Russell, Stefan Keune, Phil Minton, Phillip Hodgesmann and Georg Wolf (2, 3pm). Gail Brand & Morgan Guberman, Paul Rutherford solo, Paul

Dunnett/John Edwards/Tony Bianco, Ensemble featuring Chris Burn, John Butcher, Rhodri Davies, Jim Denley and Mat Hutchinson (2, 7.30pm), David Stuckens solo, Sten Sandell solo, Evan Parker trio featuring Barry Guy and Paul Lytle (3, 3pm), and it climaxes with the massed ranks of The Gathering and The London Improvisers Orchestra performing both separately and together. London Concorde Hall, 1-3 May, £5-£15 per concert, £10-£17 per day, £40/£25 festival pass, 020 7242 8032, www.enamericidc.com

FUTURE SONIC

MANCHESTER

Electronic music and media arts festival focusing this year on events involving turntables and mobile phones. Throughout the festival there will be installations by Matt Eagley, Lee Ranaldo, Colin Faloutsos and Russell Mills/Ian Watson. Events and concerts include Philip Jeck, Aleks Kolkowski, old vs cylinder players and Phone Faddies (27 April); a scratch team of DJ Woody/Peter Parker/G-Gut plus Seccional and band (28); a multi-DJ set headed by D-Styles from Invisibl Skratch Pilz (30). Will Sergeant's Glide, Colin Puttnar and others (1 May); a fine outdoor May Day event featuring Dizzen Rascal label mate Wiley and others (3); and Scon plays rearranged and rewired minimal techno from the Basic Channel label (8). As well as conferences, talks and workshops, there's a series of affiliated club events including

performances by Kaffe Matthews and Riz Maslen with specially commissioned films by Colind, Ultra-red and Battery Operated (27 April); U-Brown with the Blood & Fire Sound System (28); Joe Zawinul with Graham Massey's Toolshed (30) and Carrel Weiser (2 May). Manchester various venues, 27 April-8 May, £40/£32/50 festival pass (some events are free), 0161 605 8200/832 1111, www.futuresonic.com

LE WEEKEND

UK

Annual Scottish weekender sponsored by The Wire, co-programmed by contributor David Keenan and with a line-up covering the far reaches of free jazz, noise and improvised music. Four evening concerts feature Bottemagius, Paul Dunmall/Paul Rogers/Hamid Drake (27), Heather Leigh Murray, The MYGEE Medicine Show, Peik (28), Music For Buildings by Peter Dawson, Heso & Sakamoto Hironichi and System D with Ernst Reijseger, Moi Sylvie & Senghe Guye (29) and The Dead C, Loren Mazzone/Cantors & Suzanne Langlois (30). The daytime programme features talks and further performances. String Tobacco, 27-30 May, £12/£18 per day, £22/£14 two days, £40/£26 festival pass, 01786 274000, www.lnwedenfestival.com

NORFOLK FESTIVAL

NORWICH

Local arts festival featuring several jazz, Improv and World Music performers including Keith Tippett's Ultronica, a performance of Astor

Piazzolla's opera *Maria De Buenos Aires*,太极 Gustavson Trio, Warning Sheet Showcase, Joe Zawinul Syndicate, Maia, Bill Bruford's Earthworks and The Dean Street Underground Orchestra, 5-15 May, 01603 766400, www.n-joy.org.uk

RE:TO

CAMBER SANDS

The seminal Industrial group return for a one-off festival celebrating Industrial music in the 21st century. Instinct Cos, Pav, Sonex, Matmos, Black Dice, FM Emtek, Carter Tutti & Their Majestys, Lydia Lunch, Nico Enprise, Jim O'Rourke, Megg Tug Team, Medeski, Rachid H Kora, The Thingabenders, Soft Pink Irish, V.E., Big Bottom, People Like Us, Simon Fisher Turner, The Normal, John Lacy, Andy Weatherill, Jock Sargeant and Project Dark Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 14-16 May, four-bed chalet £500, 0871 220 0260, www.throbbing-gristle.com

SECOND SIGHT

LONDON

London Musicians' Collective celebrate the second anniversary of their arts radio station Resonance 104.6FM with a concert featuring over 30 artists representing the range of the station's output. Performers include Paul Head, Andy Keay, Cox, Richard Sanderson, Key, Luke Garwood, Carla Gregory and Chris Weaver with many more still to be scheduled. London Conway Hall, 15 May, 7pm, free/donations, 020 7242 8032, www.resonancefm.com

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 → OCHS, MASAKO, LEE, U.S.A. (CAN) "arry, ghe(s)s(s)
 Mysa Masako, alto/elecrt; Peggy Lee, cello
 → DE PERROT, LEONIE, CH. "Dinner de l'art", II,

→ **Basel**, Fr. 07.06., 20.06., 27.06.; Sa. 08.06., 20.06.
 → **FE-MAIL**, N. Main Seite Kleistplatz Rathaus, 1000
 electric; Hild Seife Tafel; f-h-e; electric
 → **FOOD**, N. (GB) Hill Bellarm, 1000; Nils Olav Johansen,
 0100; Mats Eltervist; In This Strand; dr
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Basel, Sa., 06.05.20 h, in Zürich, So., 07.05.20
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→ DANNY LEE (Dr.) & BRIAN DUNLOP (Bass)
→ **A-BARRY GUY NEW ORCHESTRA**, 60/61 (US/GB)
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→ Mats Gustafsson (Sax), Hans Koch (Sax), Heli Robertson (P),
→ Johannes Bauer (B), Per Åke Hellström (Dr), Raymond Strid (D),
→ Paul Lytton (Dr) → **FRANK GRATKOWSKI QUARTET**, 11/12 (DE/M)
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Lester John at Vee; Zev at Connected

VENN

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International festivals

AMPLIFY

GERMANY

ErsteLife Records takes its issue of electroacoustic improvisations to Berlin and Cologne for two consecutive weekend events put together by label boss Jon Abbey and ANM guitarist Keith Rose. Both weekends feature the following in a variety of permutations: Osamu Yoshihiko, Chisinau Femmes, Thomas Lohn, Norbert Wölkling, Gert-Jan Prins, Pita, Marcus Schmidkunz, Cor Fuhner, Sashko M., Keith Rose, Toshi Nakamura and Gunter Müller. Cologne Stadtgarten, 6-8 May and Berlin various venues, 14-16 May. www.erstliferecords.com

ANGELICA

ITALY

Adventures-looking festival featuring Charlemagne Palestine, John Tilbury performing Howard Skempton, Cornelius, Kishan Amoskar & Party playing evening ragas, Phil Minton's Final Choc, Yoshida Ikuo/Sei/Sakaseki Yukiharu/Takehashi Hideki and Chico Mello & Fernanda Fach. Plus films focusing on Cornelius Cardew and Pandit Pran Nath. Bologna and Modena various venues, 9-16 May. 06 39 051 331090, www.angelicafest.com

BIG SUR EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

USA

This annual event is twinned this year with the

first ever The Analis Nini Video & Film Diary Festival. The musicians play in continuous, constantly shifting combinations that can number between three and 30 players out of a pool of 100. This year's performers include Emesso Diaz-Infante, Thomas Dimuzio, Tom Ojli, Anna Homer, Jim Meneses, Sam Shabot, John Berndt and Alexandre St-Onge. California Big Sur Henry Miller Memorial Library, 28-30 May, \$10 per day/\$15 for both days, 001 415 386 6908, www.paxrecords.com, www.henrymiller.org

CONNECTED

GERMANY

Connected series taking place in Cologne which is part of the MusArKtAnnen, aiming to showcase current developments in electronic sound manipulation in various countries. Each evening's concert will focus on one particular nation, with artists from specific nations meeting Cologne based DJs and musicians. Artists include Mart Wind Stock, Hauser & Waterman, VVM, Zex, Jerome Kortner and Jason Forest. Domusse mmer, Cologne Kulturbauhaus, 22 April-5 May, EUR 95 for all seven, 001 49 22 181 8826, www.kulturbauhaus-bluemchen.de

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Much America's jazz-running New Music annual features Derek Bailey/Tina May/John Zorn, Ibs En, Fennessy, Sam Stalabots Alma Venus, Tim Berne's Expanded Science Fiction, Keith Rowe/Chubas, Fennessy/Dave Abbruzzi/Yoshimasa Nakamura, Acid Mothers Temple, Kaffe Matthews, Louis Sclavis' Naiad Wells, Billy Bong Ilio, John Butcher/Thomas Lohn/Andy Moor, Ron Bennink, Red Van Howe, Pato, Charlotte Hug/Charade Laprade, Benoît Delbecq/Frédéric Heuvel, Ellyer Estefé, Danuk Lam and more. Victoriaville various venues, times and prices, 001 819 752 7912, www.festival-musiqueactuelle.ca

IMPROVISEO AND OTHERWISE: A FESTIVAL OF SOUND AND FORM

USA

International festival of dance, video, music, theatre, spoken word and electronics collaborations with an emphasis on

improvisation across forms featuring, on the music side, Joseph Jarman, Michael Evans, Jason Wilcox, Bobbi Rainey's the Is, Loren Connors, Kevin Norton, Chris Foreyth, Chile Heesen, Matthew Ostrowski, Jack Wright, Paul Smoker, Scott Rosenblatt's large ensemble and 30 drumming bunnies. New York Williamsburg Art Nexus, 29 April-1 May, \$15/\$10 or \$30 for a festival pass, tickets on the door only, 001 718 599 7997, www.improvisedendetheworld.com

MOERS FESTIVAL

GERMANY

Germany's premier annual jazz festival, now in its 33rd year. David Murray Cuban Big Band, José, Helga Schmid, The Ando Orchestra Of Nazareth (CB), Le Saute Du Tympans, Roxy, Balkan & Digital Mutation, Nils Wogram & Root 70, Mars Williams & Liquid Soul (29); Evelyn Glennie & Fred Frith, Collectif Sleng, Ned Rothenberg, Double Band, Fernando Lancheras, Ragin/Kesler/Drake, David Thomas & Reflections In The Moonbeam, Bougu Maflin, South, Graeme Diffusion, Monksleeve, Lucy Dube (30); Frank Zappa's hot licks (and funny smelly), Kelli Bonnafford & Seal Faver Song, Bill Bruford and Brothers featuring Tim Gersh, Xmand, Brotherhood Of Brass, Frank London's Klamer Brass All Stars and Babu Mariposa's Orchestra and Soul Sonic Circus (31). Moers, 28-31 May. 00 49 28 41 201 722, www.moers-festival.com

MUSIQUE ACTION

FRANCE

The 20th anniversary of this contemporary music festival features Wire, Keiji Haino, Arvo Pärt from The Ex in combination with Paul Lovens, Thomas Lohn and John Butcher, Nihilist Spain Band, Kelt Roots, Christian Fennesz, Albert Meceur, Osmo Yoshihiko, Dominique Portogard, Erik M. Chevrel, Peter Hollingbery, Chris Cutler, Larry Gales and many others. Vendôme/Les-Nerfs Centre Culturel André Malraux Salle National, 1B-31 May. 00 33 6 83 636 1500, www.musiqueaction.com

NEW CONVERSATIONS: VICENZA JAZZ

ITALY

Un Cane's Solitaire, David Murray's Lone Big Band, Lee Konitz/Bill Frisell/Marc Johnson, John



Four Tet / Phoenix; Rechenzentrum at Floating Fragments

Abercrombie Quartet, 29th Street Saxophone Quartet, Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Kenny Werner Trio, Bobby Previte, Vicenza, 11-22 May, 00 39 644 221111, www.commune-vicenza.it

PHONEM

TURKEY
This "Second Electronic Music Platform" takes place in Istanbul and includes Burn Friedman & Jeli Lebelot, Four Tet, Mouse On Mars, Cobras Killer, Console, Mantoba, Schneider TM, UNKLE and more, plus a panel debate hosted by The Wire's Rob Young. Istanbul various venues, 8-15 May, 00 90 212 292 04 65, www.kodmusic.com

SP-ALT FESTIVAL

USA
Five consecutive evenings of improvised and related music with John Butcher/Gene Rebels, Phil Gelsz/ Shoko Iikusa/Aki Cline, Adam Lane/Vinnie Golia/Yve Aydenon (12 May), Neil Rothenberg solo, Normal featuring Fred Frith and Sethu Tevar, Tramserfunk Collective (13); William Hooker/Moe Steina, Uncle featuring Myles Hocken and John Surbs and Randy You solo (15); Positive Knowledge, Pepita, Seltso, Jack Wright/Sabine Kogel/Wilhelm Gneiss; Brassousaurus featuring Tim DJ and Genni Grobros/Mathew Coombes/Garth Powell San Francisco and Goldland various venues, 12-16 May, \$12/\$10 per concert or \$60/\$50 festival pass, 001 415 241 0684, www.sp-alt.org

SPRING REVERB 04

USA
Third edition of this festival of music, dance and visual art that straddles the US/Mexican border. The event is hosted by the West Coast Tramserfunk Collective and features performances from Mexico, the US, and the UK. Musicians appearing include Money Mark, Ernesto Diaz-Espinosa/Marcos Fernandez/Robert Montoya/Rent Roma, Skeleton Key Orchestra with Vanya Gole, DJ Eyal, John Butcher & Gene Rebels, Takeshi Kojima and more. San Diego Museum of Art Downtown and Tijuana (venue to be confirmed), 5-7 May, www.summerforos.com/springreverb/

TAKTLOS 04

SWITZERLAND
This Improv and New Music annual is once again split over two weekends and two cities. This

year's line-up includes Barry Guy New Orchestra featuring Evan Parker and Matt Garrison, Werner Defideisier's Small Worlds featuring John Tillery, Hank Grindekewitz Quartet featuring Gerry Hemingway, Ian Ballamy's Food, Lorry Ochs' Mya Naszczek/Peggy Lee, Dimitri De Perrot/Sabina Leonie, Fe-mail, Cornel Sieglaan/DJ Leo and Saadet Tilkiy/Tolkyay Lee/Len Dillen, Basel Gare du Nord, 6-8 May/Zurich Rose Fabrik, 7-9 May, 00 41 61 692 3219, www.taktilos.com

Special events

AFTER DARK

UK

Touring event featuring music, cinema and graffiti DJ sets and bastard step master Dystopix perform live soundtracks to unspecified films, plus there's live graffiti art from themyndemedit.com, short films from the Random Art film festival, Berliner visual artist Eclectic Method and music from UNKLE and the five DJ collective in Collective. Liverpool FACT (27 May), Glasgow Club 4 (June), Nottingham Broadways (10) and LondonICA (18 & 17), \$10/£8, www.afterdark04.com

THE BLACK RIDER

UK

English language version of the Robert Wilson production combining text by William Burroughs and music by Tom Waits and Greg Cohen London Barbican, 17 May-12 June, 7.45pm, 020 7638 4441, www.barbican.org.uk

FLOATING FRAGMENTS FESTIVAL

GERMANY

One night event combining electronic music and "artistic juggling" with Rechenzentrum, Apparat, Thomas Fehlmann, Reuter, Klangwart, DJ Monzo and the Staatsgold SoundSystem. Wuppertal U-Club, 14 May, 12 Euros, www.floatingfragments.de/f/fagments

PSYGEO CONFLUX 2004

USA

A four day psychogeographical exploration of New York co-organised by Mike Winter David Mandel. Sound related events include Katie Carter's Blogweb describing acoustic events and phenomena from around the city, Jessica

Thompson's Walking Machine, a portable header that amplifies the walker's footstep; three site specific transmission events collectively entitled Sous Les Pores, La Radios; soundwalks directed by Michelle Naga followed by a related radio broadcast and performance. Les Brûpards' Sandisch Ghost evokes the time of the Temps Square riots through a collage of interviews, found sound and archive concert footage, and Of The Bridge, a performance using the Williamsburg Bridge as a live sound source. The lunch day includes a workshop looking at the history of radio as a creative medium, including government regulation, the history of pre-regulated radio and unlicensed uses, access to the airwaves, radio's upgrap history and its relationship to the Situationist roots of psychogeography. New York City environs, 13-16 May, 001 212 488 0185, www.psycogon.org

RADIOREVERB 87.7FM

UK

The one-off community arts radio project based in Brighton includes experimental shows in the very small hotel featuring Neighbourhood, The Horse Hospital, Barbed, Noiseless Blackbird, Emiss, Louise Jervis and Rottingdean Demolition Squad. On 2 May there's a day of "difficult listening" featuring Wire, Sonja Henning, a Fat Cat Records showcase, Ed Buxton, Alan Dean, Tim Titus and Simon James. Brighton, 1-15 May, with live streaming of www.radioreverb.com

RESONANCE 104.4 FM

UK > THE WORLD

The month London's alternative music and arts radio station celebrates its second anniversary with a big happening, Second Sight (15 May, see UK festivals). On the same evening a handful of programme makers will be taking part in an event in Munich entitled On Longji Nacht, Der Musik (details at www.uu-uu.de). The evening of 31 May will feature a broadcast of a concert featuring Ash In The Rainbow (Hiroo and Sakamoto Hiroyuki) and John Butcher. The ongoing schedule includes The Wine's Adventures In Modern Music presented by a rotating team from our editorial staff (Thursdays, 9.30pm) plus shows by Wire contributors Ben Watson (Tue to Thurs), Steve Lamacq (Wednesdays, 2pm), Savage Pencil

SOUND

11-14 JUNE 2004
LEICESTER



CIRCUS

www.sonicartsnetwork.org

Kontor presents, in association with mney:

Armin Collective - Armin van Buuren, Ferry Corsten, Paul van Dyk, Aly & Fila, Markus Schulz, Paul Kalkbrenner, Trans Am, Billy Mahone, Red Chip

Wednesday 24 April Performance: Tomm & Lorraine, Kettcar, Kontrabassos, 2pm-11pm

Thursday 25 April Performance: Tomm & Lorraine, Kettcar, Kontrabassos, 2pm-11pm

Friday 26 April Performance: Ferry Corsten, 10pm-11pm

Saturday 27 April Performance: Ferry Corsten, 10pm-11pm

Sunday 28 April Performance: Ferry Corsten, 10pm-11pm

Trans Am 24 April, Ferry Corsten, 10pm-11pm

Paul Kalkbrenner 25 April, Aly & Fila, 10pm-11pm

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Out There

(Diggers with Sharts Gal, Tuesdays, 8pm) and Mike Barnes (Scratching The Surface, alternate Tuesdays, 8.30pm). You can also hear Negativland's extraordinary *Over The Edge* broadcast live from KPFA in California (Saturnus, 8pm). Broadcasts across Central London noise-jam seven days a week with repeats broadside outside these times. CD-quality Web streaming and full italangs at www.resonancefm.com

SHHH...

UK For this project, London's Victoria & Albert Museum commissioned sound-based responses to their exhibits from musicians Carenne, David Byrne, Elizabeth Fraser, Roots Manuva and Simon Fisher Turner. Visitors wear headphones which trigger the soundworks as they move through the museum. London Victoria & Albert Museum, 20 May–30 August, £5/£3, 020 7842 2000, www.vam.ac.uk

HAL WILLNER'S CAME SO FAR

FOR BEAUTY
An evening of songs by Leonard Cohen performed by Nick Cave, Louie Anderson, The Honsense Family, Rob & Anna McGarrigle, Linda & Teddy Thompson and Martha & Rufus Wainwright. Brighton Dome Concert Hall, 22–23 May, £35–£28, 01273 709 709, www.brightonticketfestival.org.uk

On stage

ACCIDENTAL BROADCAST

Accidental Records showcase featuring performances from Max Da Quesada, Mata Carlyle, Muguan and Brooks in a continuous, overlapping three-hour performance. Plus Matthew Herbert and Werk DJs on the decks. London ICA, 15 May, 020 7930 3647, www.ica.org.uk, www.accidentalrecords.com

ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO

Don Moye, Roscoe Mitchell and Joseph Jarman combine with bassist Reggie Workman and trumpeter Corey Wilkes, stepping into the roles vacated by the late Malachi Favors and Lester Bowie respectively. This date is part of a larger European tour. London Jazz Cafe, 6–7 May, £20/£17.50, www.jazzcafe.co.uk

ASH IN THE RAINBOW + JOHN BUTCHER

LMC present the Japanese duo of avant pop songstress Haico and cellist Sakamoto Hiroshi supported by saxophonist Butcher.

London The Spitz, 31 May, 7.30pm, £8/£5, www.resonancefm.com

ASIAN DUST FOUNDATION: THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS

The rock and rap diplomats perform a new soundtrack to Piontorek's film about the Algerian anti-colonial struggle of the 1950s. Brighton Dome Concert Hall, 1 May, 6.30pm & 9.30pm, £16, 01273 709709, www.brightonticketfestival.org.uk

DEVENDRA BANHART

Idiosyncratic singer-songwriter plays two shows as part of a European tour. Bristol Cabaret Mincing, 14 May, London ICA (30)

COCOROSIE

Dreamy off-kilter blues from the Brooklyn based siblings. Colchester Arts Centre (15), Nottingham The Social (17), Manchester Matt & Phine's Jazz Club (18) and London The Spitz (19). www.grrrc.com

DAVID DARLING &

THE BUNUN SINGERS

ECM Cell in collaboration with Taiwanese polyphonic singers on a Contemporary Music Network tour. Brighton St George's Church (20 May), Bristol Colston Hall (21), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (22), Salisbury Blockhouse Theatre (23), Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (24) and London Queen Elizabeth Hall (26). www.cmmusic.com

DI DOPEY

DWC World Champion DJ on tour, Bath Molas (April 28), Bournemouth Concert Hall (30), Shrewsbury Festival of the Books (1 May), Newcastle World Headquarters (5), Cardiff Moloko (6), Nottingham The Bomp (7), Leeds Elbow Rooms (8), Glasgow Sub Club (12), Southampton Nexus (13), London The End (14), Bristol Conq Academy (15) and Edinburgh Cabinet Voltaire (16).

PAUL DUNNILL/PAUL ROGERS/ HAMID DRAKE

Superb Chicago drummer Hamid Drake teams up with saxophonist Paul Dunnill and Pens based double bassist Paul Rogers for a UK tour. Belfast Crescent Arts Centre (22 May), Bristol The Bristol Music Club (23), Sheffield One Eleven Club (25), Birmingham MAC (26) and Stirling The Tolbooth (27 part of the Le Weekend festival). 01285 643688, www.mindyourheadmusic.co.uk

RENAUD GARCIA-FONS QUINTET + MIRABASS/MONDINI

Southern Mediterranean world jazz fusion on a Contemporary Music Network tour. Leeds The

Wendover (27), Oxford Barnabas Church (28), Bromley The Shed (29), Bath Pavilion (30), London St Luke's (31) and Bracknell South Hill Park (1 June). www.cmtrust.org.uk

+MINUS

Bringing together brass featuring low brass sound guru Bernhard Günter with saxophonist Graham Lambie and Mark Westall on amplified tenor sax. Norwich King Of Hearts Derby (27 May), Leeds Holy Trinity Church (28), Manchester UMIST The Great Hall (29) and London Chiswick Dennis Space (30). www.englishsax.com

JAN KOPINSKI: EARTH

A quartet led by ex-Pink Floyd saxophonist, perform a live soundtrack to the 1930 Soviet film *Zemlya* (Earth) concerning life in a Ukrainian village at the time of collectivisation. Lancaster The Dukes (18 May), Nottingham Lakeside Arts Centre (20), Exeter Phoenix (21), Cardiff Chapter (22), London Barbican (23) and Warwick Arts Centre (27). www.jankopinski.com

LIARS

US indie rockers on tour. Aberdeen The Lemon Tree (30 April), Glasgow The Brumby (30), Bristol The科 (4 May), Manchester Roadhouse (5), Sheffield University (6), Leeds O2 Academy (7), Nottingham University Rooms (8), London Mean Fiddler (10) and Oxford Zodiac (11). www.liarshawks.com

MARIA DE BUENOS AIRES BY ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

Debut of the UK staging of the iconic tango composer's concertos. Norwich Theatre Royal (12), Bath Theatre Royal (3 & 4 June), Buxton Festival Theatre (12 & 22 July).

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Post Office Records endurance act on tour. Cardiff Chapter Arts Centre (16 May), Bristol The Cube Cinema (7) and Glasgow The 13th Note (9). www.postofficerecords.com

TIGERBEAT SPECIAL

San Francisco guitar, guitar, hey Kid606, Krikthaband and randommunk. Oxford The Cellar, 7 May, 8.30pm-2am, £7/£6, www.vaccepop.com

JAH WOBBLE & INVADERS OF THE HEART

Ex-PUB bassist tours his latest project focusing on the folk music of North East England and featuring vocalist Liz Carter. Bradford The Lowry (5 May), Liverpool The Maesque (6), Manchester Academy (7), Corkile The Biscoid (8), Norwich Waterfront (26), Sheffield Boardwalk (27), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (28), Huddersfield

Bindi Tides Club (11 June), Lincolnshire The Firm Wensley (4 September) and Nottingham Rescue Rooms (5). www.thearcanerecords.com

YINYU: LONDON IMPROVED

A day of improvised music etc. as the promoters prefer to call it "...+", featuring Nat Cataphode, Jamie Coleman, Shaweb Abu Hemdan, Ross Lambe, John Ley, Sebastian Lester, Lee Parkin, Tim Reddin, Eddie Pérez, Michael Rogers, Ronald Wadleigh and Seymour Wright. London Stringray Bar, 9 May, 3–11pm, free. Yinyu.londonimprov.com

JOE ZAWINUL &

THE ZAWINUL SYNDICATE

Weather Report keyboardist with his current ensemble. Manchester Bridgewater Hall (30 April), Cheltenham Jazz Festival (2 May), London Barbican Centre (3), Cardiff St David's Hall (4), Warwick Arts Centre (6), Poole The Lighthouse (7), Norwich and Norfolk Festival (8), Brighton Dome (9) and London Royal Scott's (10–16). www.worldsport-festivals.co.uk

Club spaces

BOAT TING

Impvised music, poetry and rock monthly on a boat moored on the Thames. This month A Simlish Case For Treatment. Skit featuring improvisation by Vernon Weston and Hugh Metcalfe to homemade film, avant pop/mock instrumentals from Pocket and Poetry from mfp. London The Yacht Club, 24 May and every last Monday of the month, 7pm, £5/£2.50, 020 8670 6094, www.boat-ting.com

BREAKIN' BREAD

A breakbeat special from the breakbeats, funk and HipHop monthly featuring Freshlife, Druksoul and Moewii plus guest breakdance crews. Dynamic Souls and Funk & Disorderly London The Rhythm Factory, 22 May, 8pm–4am, £8/£5, 07767 547 008, www.breakinbread.org

CCA

Dutch improvise Michael Moore, Lyndsay Horner and Michael Vatcher explore the music of Bob Dylan in Jewels And Binoculars (12 May), Norwegian jazz from Yordi Gustavsen Trio (13), and electro-acoustic instrument builder Hugh Davies presents and plays his invention and lets the audience try them out (21). Glasgow CCA, 0141 332320, www.cca-glasgow.com

KLINKER

Twice weekly improvised music and off the wall performance club. All dates feature a number of contrasting acts. Confirmed at time of going to

CACHETA GALLERY | AZEGOTT CLUB | FREDERIC CHOPIN ACADEMY OF MUSIC | PIERNIKARIA CLUB

dieb13 | Jan Duszynski | Hubi Emmer | Erik M | Christian Höller | Elise Kermani | Sławomir Kupiszak | Bernhard Lang | Mira Calix | Franck Ollu | Patrick Pulsinger | Peter Rantahti | Borut Savški |

turning sounds²
13 - 16.05.2004 Warsaw
conference | concerts/clubbing | workshops

the '04 post-improvisors meeting "In-Wave from Standard Long's 2004" (An International and Interdisciplinary Art Week) organized by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences

3-6 JUNE
TECHNOLOGICAL & CULTURAL PARK LA VARIO
WWW.SYNCH.GR

synch
festival

ATHENS GREECE

press: One Ring Poets, Hugh McCallie's Bafford Nightmare film, Paul Hood & Howard Jacques, Alex Ward solo voice and guitar (4), GNOS (6), Wombats, Sound Of Mucus from Sweden (11), John Callaghan's Autobooks (13), Hoovers, Keep Down Like A Gorilla and Step (18), Green By Children (20), Blow Crazy, Jiggy Bits perform Eboli Breakout (25) and Rocket (27), London Session Tuesdays and Thursdays, Open, £5/£2, 020 8606 8216, www.thesession.co.uk

NO-FI

Electro Newcastle new music promoters present Mad Professor (The Quay, 2 May), Pop M, Ithaca Art Ensemble, Cithr Taylor and Jaegerling Sound System (The Clancy, 3 May), Nod505, Knifefriendship and Up (The Tyne, 10) and Noeigt and Pinter (The Tyne, 20), Newcastle The Quay, 0191 230 4474, and Newcastle The Tyne, 0191 265 2550

ONEONE

This month's name for the Bohmas brothers' experimental music weekly featuring Jim Denley, The Bohman Family (3 May), The Sound Of Music, Rock Kichman, Pascal Madaus & John Russell (10), Aphex 3-Way Kerfuffle, John Besser (17), Dominic Lash & Simon H Fell, John Gommery/Marcus Motzoy/Paul Wachsmann, Ian Stewart/Alain Northover/Hugh Barnes (24), Rob Palmer and Dumb Dino, Dennis and Snaski Miranda (31), London Tooting Centre, Mondays, 8pm, £4/E, £3/09 087409

THE ORCHESTRA PIT

First anniversary for bi-monthly club for experimental rock and adventurous music features avant pop/rock instrumentalists from Pocket, Rumpus from Animals Hard and electronics from female performance artist FS-KN, London Arts Cafe, 6 May, 7.30-11pm, £5, 020 7247 5051, www.theorchestrapit.co.uk

OXFORD IMPROVISERS

Improv concert featuring California violinist Ruth Krichmar playing solo and in duo with keyboardist Pat Thomas plus Ray Lee/Fyfe

Hutchins/Dominic Lash (9) and Howard Skereton leading an all day workshop using performance and alternative composition techniques used by The Scratch Orchestra culminating in an evening concert (15), 01865 721564, www.oxfordimprovisers.com

THE SPITZ

One more at this trusty East End venue includes BBC Radio 3's Maida Vale presenting People Like Us plus Wobbly and Egg Phuzine (6 May), call 08700 100 300 for free tickets), Cocorose (19), Karmen Noise (20) a night of instrumental rock complexity from Gutbucket, Naught and Gaap (27), and LMC presents Ash In The Rainbow and John Butcher (31). London The Spitz, 7pm, prices vary, 020 7382 9032, www.thespitz.co.uk

SPRAWL

Diverse electronic music monthly featuring US plunderphonics whacko Wobbly, experimental keyboardist and open source software author Vert, minimal electroacoustics from Hervé Baguehees and Alexander Wenzl from Resonance 104.4 FM. London The Lit House, 12 May, 7.30-11.30pm, £4/£3, 020 7251 8781, www.wifeweb.co.uk

TERMINITE CLUB

The trusty Leith premises present a night of costumes, film and extreme noise with Helen Butts, MK, Bongolongo and Romance (The Picklehouse, 7 May). The Films comprising Cor Fakler and Gest-Jan Pass (The Adelphi, 13), and +minus comprising Bernhard Göttsche, Graham Hallwell and Matt Westoll plus sound artist Lee Pottoner (Holy Trinity Church, 28). Leeds various venues times and prices, £5/£3, www.queek.com/termitate

Incoming**BAD BONN KILBI**

SWITZERLAND

Cosponsored by The Wire, this festival in the

small Swiss town of Dödingen is now in its 14th year and once again hosts a protein line-up of sounds from the outer limits. Performers include Circle, Motorpsycho, Haize, Alieg, Maja Ratkje, Bo Wijert/Alex Bussi/Michael Wettmark/Masamasa, Blaauw/Punks, Checka On Speed, DAT Politics, Sprunk and more. Dödingen various venues, 10-12 June, www.babboni.ch, www.badbonn.ch

FEEDBACK: ORDER FROM NOISE

UK Alvin Lucier holds his Contemporary Music Network Tour put together by Resonance 104.4 FM's Kout Aufmann and sponsored by The Wire. Eric Collins, Odetta Yembahe, Xentis 'Fay' Berrios, Reheurama Nekumaro and Sarah Washington also feature. Leicester Phoenix Arts (24 June), Newcastle Arts Centre (25), Norwich University of East Anglia (26), London's St Luke's (27), Colchester Arts Centre (28), Brighton Komedia (30) and Exeter Phoenix (2 July). www.cmrbus.org.uk

THE MAGIC BAND

UK Captain Beethoven associates return for a few more dates, Brighton Concorde 2 (23 June), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (24), Glastonbury Festival (25), Bristol Academy (27) and Lanson Garage (28 & 29 June). www.beethoven.com

PATTI SMITH

UK The New York punk poet plugs her new album, *Tramp* (Birmingham Academy (30 June), Edinburgh Usher Hall (1 July), Manchester University (2) and London Brixton Academy (30). www.pattismith.it/asia/pa

SONAR

Spain Major electronic biennial with live performances from Massive Attack, Portishead, Four Tet, Barbara Hendry & David Bederman, Doni Sikkila, Richie Hawtin vs Ricardo Villalobos, Gang Starr, Modibbo, CM Von Hausswolff, So Solid Crew, Thomas

Körber, Beata, Carsten Nicolai, Buck 65, Sketch Show/Ryuichi Sakamoto, Debye, Maja Ratkje, To Rococo Rot, Max Tundra and many more. Barcelona various venues, 17-19 June, www.sonar.es

LA SUONI PER IL POPOLO CANADA

Styling itself as Montreal's freeform music festival, this event, which this year is co-sponsored by The Wire, runs throughout the whole of June and hosts performances, new cabaret shows and public workshops by some of the leading lights from a wide host of underground and outsider music circles. The line-up for this fourth edition of the festival includes Sun City Girls, Lucy Jenkins & Malcolm Goldstein, Chetir Consano & Paul Flaherty Stiles, Henry Genius, Horned Drôle/Fred Anderson, Willem Parker Quartet, Martin Terešák, Sam Staklas, Pyramyd plus many more names to be announced. Montreal various venues, 3-27 June, 001 514 284 0122, www.caasedoppio.com

TORTOISE

Chicago post-rock instrumentalists, Glasgow Gorilla (28 June), London Astoria (29)

BRIAN WILSON: SMILE

UK The re-Beach Bay offers another opportunity to hear his legendary 'lost' Smile album as well as new material from his latest, *Gather In Our Midst*. St Austell Eden Project (16 July), Oxford Apollo Theatre (17), Portsmouth Guildhall (19), Ipswich Regent Theatre (20), Manchester Apollo Theatre (22) and London Royal Festival Hall (24, 25, 27 & 28). www.brianwilson.com □

Out There Items for Inclusion in the June issue should reach us by Friday 30 April

UK Radio

National

BBC RADIO 1 8.30-9.30 PM**JOHN PEEL**

Monday Thursday 10pm midnight
United Music round the board

GILLES PETTERSON

Thursday midnight-2am
Post Acid jazz

FABIO & GROOVERIDER

Saturday 7-3 am Vanguard drums & bass

WESTWOOD RAP SHOW

Friday 9.15pm/Saturday 8pm midnight
Hip Hop flows

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday midnight-2am Bass culture

MBC RADIO 3 8.30-9.30 PM**LIFE JUNCTION**

Wednesday Thursday 10.15-11pm
New Music compendium

JAZZ LEGENDS

Friday 4-5pm Archive recordings

ANDY KERSHAW

Sunday 10.15-midnight, World Music

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11.30pm-tam

Modern jazz in session and concert

WORLD ROUTES

Saturday 1-2pm

Lucy Dorian presents a travelogue of global music

JAZZ FILE

Saturday 6-30pm

Documentary magazine

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 10.45pm-tam, New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Friday 10.15-11.30pm

Hyper-electric mix of overt sounds

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on
The Wire Website, www.thewire.co.uk

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BBC LANCASHIRE

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ON THE WIRE

Saturday 10pm-midnight, The Wire's club column
Steve Baker index it up wildstyle

BBC MERSEYSIDE

9.55 FM, 1485 MW

PMS

Sunday midnight-2am: Free-wheeling mix of avant sounds

BBC SCOTLAND 92.4-94.7 FM**FROM BEBOP TO HIPHOP**

Wednesday 7.15-9.05pm, Sunday 10.05pm
midnight, Jazz and beats

CABLE RADIO 80 8 FM

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THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight, Eclectic avant mix

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Sunday 11pm-1am, Fieldtrip new music

KISS 100 FM (LONDON)**PATRICK FORGE**

Sunday 3-4am: Indie jazz-not-jazz mix

MATT JAM LAMONT

Wednesday 2-4am: Breakfast soiree or

LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM**CHARLIE GILLET**

Saturday 8.30pm-1am, World Music, roots and R&B

RANKIN' MISS P: RIDDIMS & BLUES

Saturday 8-10pm: Strictly roots

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Epiphanies

**Contrarian
commentator and
Oxbow singer
Eugene Robinson
discovers violence
in the drop-dead
detachment of
Dean Martin**

Select or already boozehoundish? Oxo

Epiphany, my ass. The cliff is one that's familiar to the inhabitants of the halls of musicology at this point. The knee bone is connected to the ankle bone and the ankle bone is connected to the foot bone and voilà, you have the beginning of the megalomaniac parts that make your favourite artist nothing more than a product of the same calculus. "Sounds like a cross between X and Y". And then there will be a stumble and a rush onto the next music oneself and so we catalogue everything that was joyful into dust.

So yeah, the whole enterprise is a rotten one. Because the sounds that have formed the basis for Oxbow and the music that we make are the sounds that thrum around in the throb of bloodstream and are most noticed in moments say when the hand is becoming a fist and it all slips into that double time theatre where everything rushes come quick and it's no owl until somebody is crying. Yes, the sounds of violence, because violence does have an animal sound that's all its own, as well as a teste and a timbre, and it's this that has captivated us for so very long of a time.

So it's strange for me to have discovered this walking in the recesses of my voluminous vanity and quiet rages and attached, inescapably, to the eavar of dead-eyed, late-stage debouchery: Dean Martin. I'll wait while you laugh. Go ahead, laugh, laugh if you want, but the irony here is not postmodern because the irony here is that there's no irony here at all. My love for Dean Martin is pure and clean.

Let's slide back a bit. In time to a time when vocalists roamed the Earth. Not just singers but vocalists, that is, artists who sing. From a place that's inaccessible as the place that gives rise to life's big fuck you items: loss, love, longing, lust. Johnny Hartman, Johnny Mathis, Johnnie Ray, Frank Sinatra, Joe Williams, Sammy Davis Jr. And a passel of others whose stars dimmed or died. All eventually done in first by musicians who had lost sight of the fact that in full Greek chorus fashion the vocalist was the demigod without which they were just, oh I don't

know, like jazz players doing the sound, doing the fury, and signifying if not nothing then surely the fact that some exercises in ego are more fun to play than to listen to. Later, the terrible troika of bad singing (read: Britney), no singing (read: Mogwai) or non-singing (read: Dže), would make singing if not unnecessary, then horribly misunderstood, as were the vocalists responsible for it.

Which is where we are now. With no referents. No coordinates. Up shit creek, drifting through a crap causeway because everybody's gone all egotitarian and thinking that singing is as easy as opening your fucking mouth.

Well, it's not.

And in the gloom of my imaginings I can see them all then, these purveyors of the violence of cool: Bing Crosby, Dean Martin, and Elvis. All of a type with Crosby the Father, Elvis the son, and Dean the Holy Fucking Ghost of the Killing Disconnect. You see, after needing everything there is to read about Dean Martin I know this much about a man that I've listened straightforwardly as a Saint (to which a weegash defector declared, "He's just a sleazy boozehound."); in life as in his art, he sat outside of it all, a curiously detached duos to the world he was creating.

Detached but not without his passions. Detached passions all oxymoronically as perfect as perfect could be, this former boxer (Old Crockett — named not after knitting, but after his real surname, Crockett) insinuated his way into my life for the first time when I was five years old. The song was "Standing On The Corner", and while I don't remember that I knew it then, it seems to me at this remove that the song's signature line for me — "Brother you can't go to jail for what you're thinking/Or for the way look in your eye" — was blasting out of every Italian house in New Rochelle, New York, when Italians still lived in New Rochelle, as gardeners and chauffeurs for the rich ensconced in nearby Westchester.

"For what you're thinking". Indeed. Because as leastways as anyone could figure out, they could

never figure out what Dean was thinking. When he knocked The Beatles off the charts in 1964. When he moved over to good films (*The Young Lions*) and bad TV in those endless, drunken variety shows. When his sex died.

Like his former partner Jerry Lewis (a genius in France) used to say: nothing.

Or to quote author and son of the famous Groucho, Arthur Marx in his hard-to-find *Martin Was Everybody's Lover Somebody Sometime... (Especially Himself)*, the mystery to Dean was no mystery at all because "looking backward, the secret of Dean Martin's extraordinary success has always seemed to be 'complete indifference' when opportunity comes knocking".

And rather than understanding this as the end result of that horrid product of the stupid and beautiful — cool — I understood it totally differently. As incredible hostility. Sure, we know that they say that every biography and certainly every hagiography is really a writer's attempt to write about themselves and hearing Oxbow music, you might be tempted to say, "Sure he sees hostility there... he probably sees hostility everywhere." But it's there, I tell you, in "Idiots", in "An Evening In Rome", in "Memories Are Made Of This".

Trojan-hororing its way into the collective subconscious of an entire generation who would later see this music pawed with the pejorative Easy Listening, or mocked by the jazz ass lounge revival. Dean Martin's vocals say one thing to my ears: FUCK YOU.

Or as he most honestly sang in his long suppressed nightclub sides where everybody, regardless of relation, was a "pally": "Blow me... a kiss before you go."

Out. On the arches. Away from him. His disdain was elementally existential.

I'll wait while you laugh. Go ahead, laugh, laugh if you want, but the irony here is not postmodern because the irony here is that there's no irony here at all. My love for Dean Martin is pure and clean. □ The Oxbow documentary *Music For Adults* is out now on DVD. See www.theoxbow.com/musicforadults

The Wire T-shirts 2004



Keith Rowe: Layered

A new piece of artwork, part of the *Food/Laminal/Counterpoint* series, by the AMM guitarist, printed in yellow on the front of a black T-shirt, with *The Wire* logo printed in yellow on the back. Limited edition of 100 T-shirts



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